

LONDON

BY NIGHT



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"LOST"



LONDON. WILLIAM OLIVER, 3. AMEN CORNER, E.C.
AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

LONDON BY NIGHT.

A DESCRIPTIVE NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ANONYMA," "SKITTLES," "LEFT HER HOME," "KATE HAMILTON," "AGNES
WILLOUGHBY," "INCOGNITA," "THE SOILED DOVE," "WOMAN OF
LONDON," "SKITTLES IN PARIS," "THE WOMAN OF PARIS,"
• ANNIE, OR THE LIFE OF A LADY'S MAID," etc. etc.

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LONDON BY NIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

Modesty.

LOUISA REID was the only daughter of Mr. Jackson Reid, the highly respected proprietor of that well-known hostelry at Gravesend, Yclept, the "Hermit Crab." Louisa was at seventeen the gentle Hebe who dispensed tea and shrimps at ninepence a-head to hungry excursionists from the great metropolis, and drew the bitter beer—which makes ambition virtue—in foaming pewter tankards.

"All this may be very true," the reader will probably exclaim; "but what's Hecuba to us, or we to Hecuba?"

We hasten to reply, "everything." Louisa Reid is our heroine; and it cannot fail to be interesting to have a little peep into her inner and early life, vouchsafed by a vivacious chronicle.

Louisa was well featured and handsome as an Andalusian beauty. She had black lustrous eyes, with long lashes, and dark glowing hair which was rich and lengthy; her mouth was small, her lips full and inviting; her complexion faultless; her bust rounded full and swelling; her teeth white as polished ivory; her hands and feet small; her stature rather above than below the medium height;

and she was altogether just the sort of dainty creature that a prince might proudly wish to clasp in his amorous arms.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Jackson Reid could fairly be called educated people, but they endeavoured to make up for their own deficiencies in that respect, by sending their daughter at an early age to school. Louisa being quick-witted made the best use of her time, and benefitted exceedingly by the instruction she received, though she left school at the early age of sixteen to serve in the bar of the "Hermit Crab," and the custom of that retiring and asatical crustacea, improved rapidly under her benignant influence.

She speedily acquired a reputation in the neighbourhood for superior learning. On the day of her arrival, she had an opportunity of exhibiting her acquaintance with the natural history of foreign climes, for a travelling menagerie halted in front of the "Hermit," and was largely patronized. A Zebra attracted great attention. Mr. Jackson Reid gave it as his opinion that it was a nog, no doubt meaning thereby an animal of the porcine species. Mrs. Reid declared it to be a noss, probably alluding to a creature of the equine breed, while the potman was positive it was an hass; he was nearer the mark than the others, most likely having an affinity with the asinine community. Louisa at once set these doubts at rest, and gave them a short but learned disquisition upon the Quagga tribe generally.

As a matter of course, she had a rustic admirer who persecuted her with his intentions. This was Matthew Collin, a young man who beguiled his leisure moments by catching white bait in the river for the supply of the Old and New Falcon Hotels, and other gastronomic establishments in that suburban retreat, which has been

playfully designated "Tomb's Beginning," but is more generally known as Gravesend.

Louisa had ideas much above her station. A man-maker of ladies' garters was accused by Madame Vestris of having thoughts above his business. Assuredly Louisa despised Matthew Collin, because she felt positive that she could do better. Had not her father and mother given her an expensive education at a boarding-school, she would have probably settled quietly down as the wife of the humble fisherman, but now she would rather have died than do so.

Gravesend has been always more or less famous for its city men. One of the residents at this charming relic of a bye gone age, was a Mr. Guy Cheriton, who was a clerk in a Stock-broker's office, and vegetated during the day in Throgmorton-street, but at night was great and resplendent at the bar of the "Hermit," when with unbushing effrontery he made violent love to the pretty bar-maid.

Matthew Collin was wont to stand and glare at him furiously, which made Louisa vastly pleased. One night Mr. Guy Cheriton came as usual into the bar with a cigar in his mouth and a rose in his buttonhole. Matthew Collin immediately commenced the glaring process, and kept it up with treble binocular power,

"Oh! what a charming rose," cried Louisa.

"It is yours if you will accept it," replied Guy, gallantly.

"I will take such care of it."

"Put it in some precious hiding-place."

Louisa's reply to this was, to pull open her dress and slip it into her bosom, next her elaborate skin.

Mr. Cheriton smiled with pleasure and satisfaction, for he saw

by this act that she loved him. He had fancied for some time past that he was not indifferent to her.

"I wish it was a hot coal," exclaimed Matthew from his seat.

"What's the matter with you, my good friend?" said Guy, regarding him curiously and with a supercilious smile.

"I wish it was a hot coal, I say!"

"Wish what was?"

"Why! that rose you give her."

"A very kind and considerate wish, truly," said Guy."

"Mind your own business, Mat." exclaimed Louisa.

"I'm blessed! I know what my business is," replied Matthew, "once I thought it was looking after you, but now that you've got a swell from London, you may look after yourself."

Drinking up his beer, he stalked out of the house with an oath between his lips.

"Pray, may I enquire who your impetuous friend is?" asked Mr. Cheriton.

"He is no friend of mine," replied Louisa, with a toss of her head.

"Some rustic admirer perhaps?"

"I don't know."

"A worshipper at the shrine of incomparable brawls?" insinuated Guy."

"I wish he would not bother me with his nonsense."

"What! if the poor fellow loves you?"

"He had better keep his love to himself."

"That is a very ungracious thing to say," cried Guy, still smiling, "he might so far honour you as to lead you to the Hymeneal

altar, put a ring upon your finger, and take you home as his household divinity, whom he is free to knock down and jump upon whenever and wherever it is his sovereign pleasure to do so."

"What a picture of happiness," said Louisa, blushing.

"I believe though that I am correct in saying that the lower orders occasionally find pastime and recreation in testing the amount of physical endurance their wives possess."

"He shall never test mine," replied Louisa, heroically.

"Don't be so hard on him."

"Never!" repeated Louisa, with emphasis.

"The poor fellow evidently is in love with you. His growling and civility evidence it."

"If you say anything more, I shall be cross with you."

"In that case we will change the subject and decidedly not return to our mutttons."

"When are you going to take me out for a walk as you promised," asked Louisa, with an amount of prococity which the parents of that young lady were far from giving her credit for.

"When you next have your Sunday out," replied Guy, jocularly.

"That is nonsense. I am my own mistress and can go when I choose," said Louisa.

"Very well, to-night at about nine. The carrier will bring you a parcel."

"What then."

"It will contain a black silk dress and a velvet jacket."

"For me!"

"For you," said Guy

"Indeed!" exclaimed Louisa, affecting annoyance, though secretly pleased at the prospect of so handsome a present, you think I suppose that I have nothing good enough to go out with you in."

"Really, my dear child, I thought nothing of the sort."

"You must have done so, but I beg to inform you that I have silk dresses and shawls up-stairs, far more valuable than any you could afford to buy me."

"Excellent!" cried Guy, laughing.

"Why?"

"You have lifted the curtain and I have enjoyed a pass behind the scenes. Your wardrobe I am gratified to know is well provided; your temper I am still more gratified to perceive is spirited.

"Never mind my temper; what I have told you about my wardrobe, is true."

"So much the better for your husband."

"Who is he?"

"Mr. Mat. of course, our amiable friend who uses the Doric style of language in preference to the Ionic."

"Now I wont go out with you at all," said Louisa, pouting her lips.

"Don't be cruel, fair enslaver of my heart, replied Guy."

"Your heart!"

"Mine, everlasting charmer."

"I don't believe you have one."

"Feel it beating wildly at this moment—beating for love of you, one smile will calm it, one kiss restore it to its wonted serenity."

"Then it never will be serene, for I am sure I shan't kiss you," said Louisa.

Mr. Guy Cheriton extended his arm, caught her round the waist, and was drawing her over the bar, when that rather childish specimen of humanity, Mr. Jackson Reid made his appearance.

"Hollo there," he cried, "can't have none of that larking here. Stash it."

"The girls won't leave me alone, Mr. Reid," said Guy.

"Put it t'other way and say you won't leave the girls alone, ha! ha!"

"That would not be far from the truth," exclaimed a bystander.

"You ought to stand a bottle of champagne to square that," continued the landlord.

"Two if you like, most worthy boniface."

The wine was produced, drank, and what was of infinitely more importance to the tavern keeper, paid for. Later in the evening the carrier arrived with Mr. Cheriton's present.

"See how you like the things," he whispered, "and meet me to-morrow afternoon on Windmill Hill."

She nodded her head in acquiescence, and he went away.

CHAPTER II.

Windmill Hill by Moonlight.

MR. GUY CHERITON waited a long time on Windmill Hill for Louisa, but she did not make her appearance. He went up the mill, and stood in the gallery facing the tower, looking out for her, he studied the camera obscura, he walked through the maze and lost himself, and lastly he sat down before the Bellvue Tavern, and ordered some port wine and filberts, over which he sat till the sun went down and the moon rose.

At seven o'clock an apparition in a black silk dress and a velvet jacket was visible and slowly ascending the hill.

Guy saw it, and concluded rightly that it was his inamorata, and rushed to meet her. The next moment he was holding her by the hand and interrogating her as to the strange cause of her prolonged delay.

"Oh," exclaimed Louisa in almost tearful accents, I have been in such great trouble since nine o'clock.

"How was that my pet," said Guy, affectionately pressing her little gloved hand in his.

"I was dressed all ready to go out, when in came Matthew Collin."

"Your admirer?"

"The man you saw yesterday Well my father asked me where I was going to."

"For a walk," said I,

"Yes, to meet that London fellow," exclaimed Matthew.

"And he so worked upon my father, that he refused to let me go out, and as I was determined to disobey his authority, he locked me in my room, and said he would keep me on bread and water for a week to see if that would not cool my courage."

"The monster," ejaculated Guy, indignantly.

"My mother came to me and began to upbraid me," continued Lousia, "she said you were evidently a base and dishonable man, whose sole aim and intention was to—to,"

"What, darling?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Tell me, I wish to know," persisted Guy.

"She said you meant to lead me on till you had induced me to love you, and then—then,"

Guy Cheriton bent down and listened intently.

"Speak dearest, be not afraid."

"You would seduce me," she whispered, casting her eyes upon the ground in confusion.

"Nonsense," cried Guy, while a peculiar smile played around the corners of his mouth, "how did you get away at last?"

"My window was not far from the ground. I made a rope, and let myself down hand under hand."

"A brave little woman," exclaiming Guy in a laudatory tone.

"It was all for your sake," she replied.

"Yes. I promised to meet you, and I always keep my word. Now that I have offended my parents, I know not what to do. I feel alone in the world."

"That you will never be, my sweetest one, so long as I live."

"Will you care for me, Mr. Cheriton, asked Louisa, looking up at him with her full lustrous black eyes."

"Call me Guy, dear."

"Will you, Guy?"

"I do already. Nay, more, I love you."

"Will you, will you marry me, dear Guy? asked Louisa, who seemed to reciprocate his ostentations by paraded affection.

"That, my child, is premature," responded Guy Cheriton, gravely. "We have known one another so short a time that—that in fact we will recur to that subject another time. At present let us enjoy ourselves. What wine would you prefer?"

Louisa declared in favour of sherry. It being slightly cold, Guy led her into the "Bellevue," and ordered a bottle of sherry. The moon shone brightly through the open window, and they both sat for some time, silently admiring the landscape. The town of Gravesend lay calm and still below them, bathed in the silvery beams which enveloped it like a flood. The ships lying at anchor, and those running down with the tide were distinctly visible even to the smallest of their span and the minutest of thin ropes.

"What a lovely night," murmured Guy.

"It is indeed," she replied.

Louisa felt grateful to him for breaking a silence which was beginning to prove oppressive in the extreme.

"What were you thinking of?" asked Guy, making one of those silly speeches in which lovers are prone to indulge.

"Of my home."

"Is that all?"

"And of my future," she replied.

"Do not doubt that it will be a happy one," said Guy, prophetically.

"I sometimes think I was born under a stormy star, and that my destiny will be an unquiet one."

"It is better to wear, than to rust out," said Guy, as if speaking to himself.

"So I think," quickly responded Louisa, "and if my fate comes I shall accept and do nothing to resist it."

"Do you intend to go home to-night?" asked Guy, desirous of impregnating her mind with other and new ideas.

"What else can I do?" she enquired.

"Have you no relations in the town?"

"No friends."

"I have some acquaintances who would probably shelter me; perhaps I may be more civilly treated then, after this assertion of my independence."

"Possibly; but you will never be really independent until you change your name."

"That is not so very impossible an event," Louisa answered, with a roguish glance.

"I have something to propose," said Guy.

"It must be something worth hearing, if it emanates from you."

"Is that your opinion?"

"At all events it is flattering."

"I propose that we spend the evening at Rosherville, which, as

the Londoners say, 'is the place to pass a 'appy day.' Come! what do you say? Dismiss your melancholy forebodings; be courageous for once, and come to Rosherville."

"I am afraid I shall be acting imprudently," Lousia said, with some degree of hesitation.

"Not at all."

"I shall not get back to my father and mother 'till past twelve."

"What of that?" asked Guy.

"They will not let me in."

"Is that all?"

"Is it not enough?"

"Laugh at such a trifle. I will order a room for you at a hotel, or possibly my landlady can accommodate you at my lodgings."

"Oh! No, no," said Louisa, "that would compromise me, irretrievably."

"Do you think so?"

"I do not think; I know it. My own sense tells me that it would be so."

"I confess it does not strike me in that light," replied Guy. "But please yourself. Come to Rosherville for an hour or so, and you can be home again before closing time; five minutes' walk will bring us to the Station, where there are plenty of flies to be had, and the distance from here to the gardens is nothing very alarming; a little gaiety is what you want."

"Do I?" said Louisa.

"Indeed you do. Have a change of scene now and then; you

are too much shut up. I consider that a young and lovely girl like yourself——”

“You are going to flatter me, which I do not like,” interrupted Louisa.

“I do not wish to influence your determination one way or the other,” replied Guy Cheriton, “Will you go or will you not?”

Louisa held down her head for a moment, as if in deep thought, at last she came to a resolution, which, although she was ignorant of the fact at the time, affected the whole of her future career.

Springing to her feet, with a flashing eye, and a burning face, she said, “I will.”

Guy offered her his arm, and they left the little picturesque hotel, which they had favoured with their casual custom. The moon passed behind a cloud as they emerged upon the hill. Was this ominous of coming evil? Louisa thought so, for she trembled.

“Are you cold, dearest?” asked Guy, as he felt her shiver.

“A wee bit,” she answered.

“Let us walk quickly. The night air is chilly.”

“Oh, Guy!” cried Louisa stopping abruptly.

“What, darling?”

“I am afraid I am a very—very foolish girl.”

“Why?”

“Something tells me I ought not to be disobedient and fly in the face of my parents.”

“Well, my child, be obedient; if it is your humour,” replied Guy, quietly, “Go home by all means, and make yourself agreeable to Matthew; be shut in your room when ever the tyranny of

parental caprice dictates such a course of salutary discipline. Go home, by all means, and be chartered by a liberal diet of bread and water, which I should imagine was well calculated to mortify the flesh."

"No ; I will go with you. Take me where you will. I am in your hands and those of fate to-night."

She laughed a wild reckless laugh, and the next moment they had disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER III.

Rosherville.

Rosherville Gardens setting aside the cant and clap-trap of newspaper advertisements, really is a place in which to spend an agreeable day. Of course at night it partakes more or less of the character of places where music and dancing goes on. All over the world the *demi monde* establishes a footing for itself where pleasure and excitement is to be had, and at Rosherville, as at Cremorne and Highbury Barn, the goats and sheep mingle together. The gardens are laid out with exquisite taste, pastures of flowers are intersected by neatly kept and gravelled walks, birds of grand plumage, adorn the fairy scene, terrace rises upon terrace, the huge chalk walls shelter the revellers from the wind and all is gaiety and enjoyment. The spirited and enterprising proprietor Mr. Seaton deserves well of the public for the indefatigable care he has bestowed upon this veritable Eden, which seems more fit for the abode of faies than ordinary mortals. But

“ We take the goods the gods provide us

“ When lovely fairy sits beside us.”

It was not Louisa's first appearance at Rosherville, she had been there on many occasions, for it was a favourite resort of hers but she had always been accustomed to go attended by her friends. On this eventful night she was with a young and handsome man, for whom she had a predilection and who had told her openly that he loved her.

She had formerly drawn her dress closer around her when she beheld women whose degrading avocation was notorious, to-night she glanced pityingly upon them and wondered if she was to drink as much as they, she too would become gay and hilarious.

Going into the handsome and commodious building in which refreshments were supplied, Guy Cheriton ordered some champagne which was promptly supplied, and of which Louisa drank with avidity. It was of *première qualité* and bore Roederer's brand, which may account for its getting a little into her head and causing her to dance with a persistence and exertion worthy of a better cause.

When she complained of feeling tired, Guy, taking advantage of the opportunity offered him, led her to a secluded part of the garden. They sat down on a particularly formed garden chair, the tinkling of water falling melodiously into a fountain basin fell upon their ears, while the music of the band faintly carried on the wings of the zephyr reached them at intervals. The wind sighed mournfully through the branches of the trees and all conduced to the existence of an amorous feeling, which seductive sensation Louisa for one could not resist.

Guy placed his arm round her waist and she made no resistance, this was something gained. In storming a fortress the besiegers are surely fortunate if they are allowed to sit down before it without being molested by a single shot.

"My darling, are you happy," said Guy.

"In the consciousness of your love, yes. In the reflection of my own unworthiness and present position, no," she replied oracularly.

"I will alter that position."

"Will you marry me," asked Louisa.

"What folly it is to continually keep upon that string," replied Guy Cheriton, in a tone of slight displeasure. The cold word marriage ever casts a blight upon the warmth of love.

"A woman who cannot trust a man of honour unless he promises at once to marry her, must be mercenary and designing."

"Not in the least, a woman is so much in the power of a man that she only exercises common prudence in looking after her interests."

"I would never consent to buy the love of a woman with a promise of marriage," said Guy grandly.

"Must a girl be totally unprotected," queried Louisa

"Love is represented as being blind and so it is both blind and unreflecting, when it deserves the name prudence is thrown to the winds, the future is left to shift for itself."

"Do you wish me to be a—a—

Her voice faltered, and she could proceed no further.

"Why construe my observations into remarks of a nature personal to yourself," exclaimed Guy coming to the rescue and moderating the high tone he had taken up.

"I thought you meant me to apply them."

"Certainly not. I have already told you that you have stolen my heart, for that pardonable theft—never a very serious misdemeanour in the high court of love—I readily forgive you, but you must place implicit confidence in me."

"What do you want me to do."

Put yourself universally in my hands, and trust to my honour.

The laws of marriage are not those of nature, they are artificial trammels.

"Yes, but created for the benefit and preservation of society."

"I do not see it."

"Paley says in effect, 'if there is no difference between vows of honour and legal vows—if the former are as binding as the latter, why refuse to conform to the regulations by which society is governed'."

Guy Cheriton stared wonderingly at her. To hear a girl living in a country public house, quote Paley and appear conversant with his moral philosophy, certainly did astonish him.

"You have said Paley," he said.

"Oh! yes, probably I know more than you give me credit for. I am not a silly girl dear Guy, and for that reason you ought to prize me more highly than I fear you do," replied Louisa with a winning smile.

"You are an angel my dear child," he cried "and I do prize you Heaven knows more than aught else in this world or any other."

"Make me your own then for ever."

"Willingly."

"A special license will not be expensive, we shall then be mutually protected."

"Against what?" he asked blankly.

"Caprice," she answered "satiety, and a hundred other little drawbacks to wedded life; you may tire of me after I have passed the best grain of my life with you."

"Once for all dear child," exclaimed Guy plainly and decisively

"I tell you I will not marry you now, and for two reasons."

"What are they?"

"One is, my wish to test the sincerity of your love."

"And the second?"

"If I were at this moment to contract a matrimonial alliance displeasing to my father, and he is a man of ambitious designs and elevated ways, I should lose several thousand pounds, which if I keep in with him will be mine in a couple of years. You perceive that my reasons are cogent."

"What shall I do," murmured Louisa, in a low tone so low, indeed that the words were only just audible to Guy.

"Do! my little fairy," he replied "love more; I love you, trust to me to make you my darling wife, when such a thing can be done with safety; give yourself up to the full force of the passion which your pretty eloquent expressive eyes tells me you cherish."

"God knows I do love you," she said.

"Well enough to sacrifice your position for a while and put up with temporary unpleasantness?"

The silly moth approached a little nearer to the candle which was burning in a most alluring manner.

"All will be joy then in your love," Louisa replied.

He drew her closer to him, and her head soon reclined upon his breast: his face approached hers, as the needle the magnet, and he imprinted a burning kiss upon her lips.

This was the first loving kiss she had ever indulged in—a sensation of intense happiness darted through her, she gave herself up to the madness of the hour; oblivious of the future, unmindful of the past—thinking only of the happy, happy, superlatively

happy present; in which she found it in her heart to wish to dwell for ever.

Again and again he kissed, and after the first one or two kisses, she returned his caresses so that he knew he was master of the situation.

After half an hour spent in so charming a manner, that it seemed but ten minutes, they returned in a dreamy state to the dancing platform, listening to the music, and watched the meritorious creatures whirling in the maze of the giddy waltz, or walking through the figures of the staid quadrille.

Suddenly a shout roused Guy Cheriton's attention.

"Hi! There she be, I see her wi' that London fellow, look alive and mind she don't bolt."

Looking round he perceived Mr. Jackson Reid, accompanied by Matthew Collin. Affairs began to bear an ugly complexion. Mr. Reid had no doubt sallied forth at that late hour of the night, in search of his daughter. The would-be seducer had to fear physical uncomfatableness, which might at any time be inflicted by the brawney sea-salted fist of Matthew Collin.

"Oh, good heavens! my father! what shall I do?" exclaimed Louisa.

"Go home quietly for the present."

"But—"

"There is nothing else for it," replied Guy, in a low tone.

They had not much time for talking. Mr. Reid, whom Collin had signalled was coming up at a run.

"It is such agony to leave you," cried Louisa biting her lips.

"I will write to you to-morrow."

"When shall we meet again—quick! tell me, I see my father coming."

"You must come to London: full instructions and particulars will be contained in my note."

"Perhaps they will not let me have it."

"I will arrange all that, leave it to me—have perfect trust and confidence in me," said Guy.

When Mr. Jackson Reid arrived, he seized his daughter by the arm and hoarse with passion began to abuse her in round terms, though in no measured language.

"It bean't her master, its this Lunnon swell," said Matthew Collin, whose antipathy to Guy was very vehement.

A small crowd had collected and were watching the parental proceedings with much interest. The theory was not very great, because the noise of the music deadened the sound of the voices raised in angry contention, and occupied many couples in saltatory exercise.

"You're a scoundrel, sir," exclaimed Mr. Reid, addressing Guy.

"Why so," he asked, puffing away lazily at a cigar.

"Because—because, you are—didn't you run away with my daughter."

"We only came out for an evening's amusement."

"I dissay; oh! my, tell that to the marines, A. B's won't swallow it whole," laughed Matther Collin.

"It is a fact father," said Louisa.

"Hold your tongue, hussey" replied Mr. Reid, sternly, "have some respect for your father."

"I shan't unless you do something to inspire it," she replied defiantly.

"I really do not see how you are justified in speaking to Miss Reid as you do," cried Guy, "she has committed no heinous fault or unpardonable sin that I can perceive."

"You mind your own business, I'll tackle *you* afterwards," said the aggrieved parent.

"Leave him to me, guv'nor," said Matthew.

Mr. Reid nodded, and Matthew Collin's pent-up rage found vent; without a word he doubled his fist and aimed a blow at Guy, who fortunately stepped back, so as to avoid the full force of the concussion between brain and fist, or, mind and matter, but his hat was knocked off and the skin of his right temple grazed.

Luckily a policeman made his appearance at the right time. Espying him, Guy exclaimed, "take this man in charge for assualting me."

"I saw it Sir, and I'll have him safe enough," replied the policeman.

So saying he grasped Matthew by the collar, much to that delectable young person's surprise and mortification.

"Will you come to the station and charge him Sir," continued the policeman.

"Yes, wait half a minute."

"I'll take him outside and wait at the gate."

"Do so."

"What do you mean?" asked Matthew, you aint going to charge me, are you?"

"Certainly I am," replied Guy.

“What for?”

“Committing a breach of the peace.”

“Well I never did, I thought you were more of a plucked 'un than that.”

“Happily the land protects respectable people against such ruffians as yourself,” said Guy.

“What's all this,” enquired Mr. Reid, “Mat locked up, never mind, lad, I'll be bail for you and pay your fine in the morning.”

The policeman now moved off with his prisoner, Mr. Reid and Louisa followed, Guy was left alone by himself, at every step Louisa turned round and indulged in a wistful look at Guy, who smiled and threw kisses towards her.

CHAPTER IV.

IN London.

EVENTS multiplied themselves at Gravesend. Louisa received Guy Cheriton's letter, and made her way to London, shaking off the dust from her shoes against her father's house, which was a very foolish thing to do, but she being young, headstrong and impetuous, could not be induced to think so.

Guy had provided lodgings for her at Pimlico, where they lived as man and wife; he treated her with every kindness and gave her what money he could spare, but not being a rich man, this did not amount to much.

Louisa was happy in her new condition of life. She felt all the joy that a young wife of an affectionate and amorous disposition invariably experiences in the society of a loving husband, not much older than herself, and impregnated with the same tastes.

Mr. and Mrs. Jackson Reid were much grieved at the desertion of their daughter. A heavy weight of oppression came upon them and they mourned her as one dead.

Matthew Collin vowed a terrible vengeance.

"I'll have my revenge," he was frequently heard to exclaim, "Ay, if I'm hanged for it."

Though what he had to revenge it was difficult to discover; he was not a relation, and the girl had never shown any decided

preference for him or made him any promise upon which he could build up his hopes of some day becoming her husband.

Guy Cheriton knew nothing of these threats ; had he done so, his equanimity would not have been in the least degree disturbed.

Three months elapsed.

Guy did not induct Louisa into the mysteries of London life. London by night was to her a sealed book ; nor did she wish to turn over its pages. So perfectly happy was she in his society that she longed for nothing more.

"I wonder how my father and mother are progressing," she said one day in October, when they were sitting together enjoying walnuts and old port.

"If you like I will go to Gravesend and find out," replied Guy.

"Please do," but——

She hesitated.

"What do you fear?"

"Beware of Matthew. Something might happen."

"I am not in the least afraid. He dare not do anything to me," replied Guy contemptuously.

"I do not wish to excite alarm in your breast, but pray be careful."

"Trust me."

The next day Guy went to Gravesend, wandered about, and made his enquiries. As a matter of course, he kept away from the "Hermit Crab," but it so chanced that he was seen by Matthew Collin, who dogged his footsteps the whole of the day. In the afternoon Guy took a walk by the side of the river ; his

meditations were rudely interrupted by the sudden apparition who stood before him and impeded his progress.

The spot Matthew had chosen for his appearance was a very lonely one. The tide was out, and a long patch of blue mud stretched far from the shore to the receding water. There was no one about ; in the absence of wind the ships lay lazily at anchor and the steamers left dark clouds of smoke, like palls in the sky, behind them.

“ Oh ! my worthy friend, how are you ? ” exclaimed Guy.

“ Well enough in body, but ill in mind,” replied Matthew.

“ Here is half-a-crown ; take it and go and get some beer. It is an infallible specific amongst working men.”

Matthew tossed the money contemptuously from him and it fell with a thud on the mud, into which it immediately penetrated and sank.

“ What do you want ? ” asked Guy, beginning to get angry.

“ Something you won’t care about parting with, I daresay.”

“ Name it.”

“ *Your life*,” replied Matthew, hissing out the words between his teeth.

At this ominous declaration Guy Cheriton stepped back a pace or two and was alarmed to notice for the first time, that there was a wildness about the man’s eyes which nearly amounted to the fierce glare of insanity.

Without giving his victim any time to prepare himself for defence, Matthew sprang upon him, and grasping him tightly by the throat, forced him down on his knees, then he struck him repeatedly, administering such violent blows that the unhappy wretch was speedily stunned.

Satisfying himself that this was the case, he took up the body and cast it head downwards, into the mud. It was speedily enveloped in the slimy matter; for some time he waited to see if any signs of life exhibited themselves; once or twice the heavy viscous mud heaved as if under the influence of volcanic action, but the work of suffocation went bravely on, and soon all was still—still as the grave.

The murderer slowly retraced his steps to the town; a smile of ferocious satisfaction sat on his lips, he had accomplished the grand object of his life. He proceeded at once to a crimps. Service was offered him on board an outward-bound ship, which would drop down with the tide that night. He accepted it, and at half-past eleven a boat put off from the ship, applied for extra hands, received them, and Matthew Collin amongst the number, was taken on board, and before morning some distance on his way to Shanghai.

Wearily, wearily passed the hours for Louisa, who momentarily expected the return of Guy. Could he have deserted her? Impossible. Such a course of conduct was incompatible with his numerous vows and protestations. What then could be the cause of his delay? The hot, scalding tears gathered in her eyes, trembled a moment on the lids, and then rolled down her cheeks in tempestuous streams.

That night she slept little: the next day passed with increased alarm, and which before evening increased to positive terror.

At five o'clock some one brought her an evening paper, which she opened and began to read, for the purpose of distracting her attention from the melancholy which engrossed it.

A leaded paragraph arrested her gaze ; she read it with blanching cheek and beating heart. It was to this effect :—

“ STRANGE DISCOVERY AT GRAVESEND.

“ At an early hour this morning the body of a gentleman was discovered in the mud of the river below this town ; traces of violence were perceptible about the head and face, and the police have little doubt that an awful murder has been committed ; from letters found in the possession of the deceased there is little doubt that his name is Guy Cheriton.

“ A singular circumstance is, that a young fisherman of this town named Matthew Collin has disappeared. The police are upon his track.

“ Dead ! dead ! He is dead,” screamed Louisa, with a terrible cry, she fell forward on her face and fainted.

The people of the house, alarmed at her outcry, rushed into the room. The landlady at once did what she could to bring her to her senses, in which kind endeavour she was ably seconded by a young lady who occupied the drawing-room floor, and who manifested much interest in Louisa.”

When the poor young creature came to herself she passed from one fit of hysterics into another.

“ There ! there ! be calm,” said the landlady.

“ How can I be calm ?” responded Louisa, and weeping afresh.

“ What has happened ?”

“ He is dead.”

“ Who ?”

"My husband ; he was cruelly murdered. Take the paper. It is all there," sobbed Louisa.

The landlady took the paper and read the account of the finding of Mr. Guy Cheriton's body.

The sympathising young lady was named Annie Harman, and she asked the woman of the house to go away and leave Louisa to her fostering care, which she eventually did.

"I don't know what to do. My rent looks queer," said the woman.

"I'll be answerable for that," replied Annie, regarding her with disgust.

"Say you so, my dear ; then that's all right."

Annie Harman was one of a numerous class of women, who infest our metropolis, and indeed all great cities. She had an extensive acquaintance, and received the visits of gentlemen who of course paid handsomely for the caresses she sold and they bought. She was in what many called a good position, and determined to accord her friendship to Louisa.

Having placed her upon a sofa she bathed her temples with eau de cologne, and pushed back her luxuriant hair which lay in tangled masses over her forehead.

"She's very beautiful," she muttered.

"Did you speak to me?" asked Louisa.

"How do you feel now dear, are you better?" asked Annie Harman.

"A little ; but my heart is so heavy, you don't know how I loved him."

"Yes I do dear, I too have had great troubles you will get over yours as I have successively surmounted mine."

The confident tone in which she spoke roused Louisa's attention.

"You look too happy to have suffered much," she replied.

"One's exterior appearance often hides much that is miserable. The human heart is the graveyard in which lie buried hopes and memories of the past. It is peopled with ghastly skeletons ; true happiness is only realized when the heart is cold, selfish, and callous—when egotism reigns supreme."

Louisa listened attentively to this strange speech, which she could scarcely believe emanated from the woman before her, whose manner, when she had seen her before, had been flippant and jocular.

"I will not moralize," continued Annie Harman, "because, in the first place, I hate it; and in the second, it makes one dull : what do you drink ?

This abrupt termination from grave to gay astonished Louisa.

"I don't drink at all," she replied.

"Then it is time you were initiated into a bad habit, which will soon become a necessity of your existence. I have some gin upstairs, I will fetch it, all women drink gin you know."

"All women drink gin !" Here was a hardy assertion, the truth of which Louisa wasn't prepared to indorse.

Annie went away to fetch the spirit, and soon returned with a bottle more than half full.

"Here my dear," she said, pouring out a glass ; "here is some of the best White Satan, take it, it will do you good."

Thus urged Louisa did drink it, a shudder passed through her as she set the glass down, but she felt all the better after it.

"I can make allowance for you dear," exclaimed Annie, "but

you must not give way, indeed you must not; in a few days your mind will be more tranquillized."

"God send it may be so, for now I wish I were cold in death by *his* side. Oh ! I did love him so."

Her tears flowed afresh, but the paroxysm was not so violent as the preceding ones.

CHAPTER V.

Sybil Dudley.

A month elapsed : and thirty days in the life of a young woman is a long time. Many things had occurred. Guy Cheriton, who paid so dearly for his illicit love, was buried. Louisa had determined to remain in town, and give up all idea of returning to her family, which she abandoned without a pang. She thought—ungentle enough—that they had some sort of complicity in Matthew Collin's wickedness, and she loathed them as constructive murderers before the fact.

Her resolve was not a little aided by the advice and companionship of her new friend, Annie Harman ; who by her remarks helped to mould her unformed character.

“ Stop in town,” said Annie, “ and go about with me.”

“ What do you do for a living ?” enquired Louisa.

In her innocence she thought Annie Harman a lady of independent means.

“ What do you think ?”

“ I suppose you have an allowance from your friends.”

“ Yes,” replied Annie laughing.

“ Is it a handsome one ?”

“ That depends upon circumstances.”

“ You have no regular income then ?”

"No," replied Annie, calling her little pet dog towards her, and fondling it on her knee, the said dog being a very fine specimen of an undecided terrier.

"Why do you not live with your friends?" asked Louisa.

"Because they wont keep me."

This was literally true.

"Have you offended them?"

"My dear child, I will not keep you any longer beating about the bush said Annie, with a ludicrous expression of countenance; I am what is termed a gay woman, and get my living as I can."

"Indeed!" cried Louisa, being much surprised.

"You need not put on any virtuous airs. I don't suppose that man Cheriton was your husband?"

"No!" but he would have been.

"He told you so?"

"Yes!"

"And you were fool enough to believe him cried Annie with an incredulous air. Well! I suppose I must make allowance for you? I am sceptical, but there I am an old bird comparatively, and chaff is not my usual diet."

"I am sure he would," replied Louisa indignantly, "he promised me!"

"Men always promise but they never keep their words."

"Do you like the life you are leading?"

"Pretty well. I'm always gay. Out every night almost. Have plenty of money, and wear everything new as it comes out. Make up your mind to come about with me and see a little of London by night. It is worth your while, I assure you."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. In fact, I was thinking about you yesterday, and I do not see what else you can do. Throw yourself on the town. It is better than trying to get an 'honest living,' as the conventicle slang goes."

"I suppose women can get needlework to do," said Louisa.

"Try it."

"Where should I go?"

"To some advertising Jew tailor, I suppose."

"What would he pay?"

"I really don't know; perhaps fourpence for a shirt, or sixpence for a pair of breeches," replied Annie Harman.

"Will you take me with you to some of your haunts?" asked Louisa, drawing back, as the dilemma in which she was placed began to shew its horns.

"With pleasure. You must change your name, though."

"Why?"

"Every woman does."

"Did you?"

"Of course. I took my name from the first man who kept me. Call yourself—let me see: suppose we say—'Sybil Dudley.'"

"That is very pretty."

"Yes; rather taking. I'll get you some cards printed."

"Cards!"

"You cannot well get on without them. We will begin to-night. I will order the brougham at nine. What have you got to wear?"

"A black and a mauve silk."

“Wear your black and your velvet jacket ; they will go well together.”

At nine the brougham arrived. Annie Harman and our heroine, now Sybil Dudley, in all the glory of crinoline and silk, got on, and were driven off at a quick pace to the Argyll Rooms.

CHAPTER VI.

At the Argyll.

THE Argyll Rooms are worthy of being placed in the first pages of "London by Night." They owe their present prosperity and high reputation entirely to the excellent management of Mr. Bicknell, who, for many years, has given his undivided attention to this popular place of amusement. Here all classes may be met with: amateurs who have travelled long distances to hear the well-executed music of the band, formed under the direction of M. Laurent; those who are fond of dancing; men in the army; and gentlemen of all professions and ranks, who wish to beguile a few hours in pleasant society untrammelled by the conventionalities and restraints of Bayswater and Belgravia; ladies whose virtue is more easy than difficult—all mingle together with a decorum which the Casino Cadet and the Mabilie may well envy.

The brougham stopped in Windmill Street, at the top of the Haymarket, and the ladies alighted. Every official connected with the establishment seemed to know Annie, and treated her with civility and respect.

Our heroine, whom we shall in future call Sybil Dudley, totally in ignorance of the etiquette of the place, was about to take a seat in the room below, when Annie exclaimed—

"Not there! come up stairs."

This upward move necessitated an additional payment, which, however, was well worth the money, for it permitted them to move amongst the *élite*. The goats were down stairs, the sheep upstairs. They were very properly separated.

The gallery was by no means full ; ten o'clock had not struck, consequently it was early.

"There are not many people here," said Annie, looking round.

"How is that?"

"It is so early."

"Shall we have something to drink," said Sybil Dudley. "I am falling into your ways, you see, and paying attention to your prejudices."

"Not yet," replied Annie.

"Why not? I have some money."

"So have I, you little goose; but I don't mean to part with it yet."

"What will you do then?"

"What I am doing now."

"You are standing still. What else are you doing?"

"Looking out for a victim," said Annie Harman, with a laugh.

"Pray explain?"

"I make it a rule never to pay for anything while there is a man within at least a mile of me."

"Oh, now I see what you mean," replied Sybil, laughing, "I perceive that I shall learn something presently."

"It is about time you did. You are not a chicken. Oh, thank goodness here comes some one I know."

"A woman."

"No child, I never cultivate women," replied Annie sharply ; "women hate me, to know them is folly ; they cannot keep you, they only make you drink too much and waste your time—in a word they ruin you."

"There are two men coming together."

"One is my friend, the other I do not know, he will do for you,"

The two men were well dressed and had a military appearance, the one whom Annie Harman was acquainted with was a Captain Tindal.

"How do you do," he exclaimed, lifting his hat, "I hardly expected to see you here so early.

"I may make the same remark to you," said Annie."

"I have certainly laid myself open to it, but I have an excuse ; our dinner at the club was bad, the port corked, and the olives indifferent ; add to which catalogue of evils that the smoking-room was thronged, and all the billiard tables engaged.

"The Argyll is the gainer by your presence."

"I am complimented."

"Who is your friend ? you have not introduced him said Annie."

"He may introduce himself, he is not generally backward," replied Captain Tindal.

"Do not believe him," exclaimed the friend, "I am really very bashful."

"In that case you will get on excellently with my friend, who is new to London life."

"Indeed !" he said, regarding Sybil with interest.

"This is her first appearance on the gay and festive scene."

"And mine, too, for some considerable time."

"How is that?" asked Annie.

"I have been with my regiment in Canada."

"The Guards?"

"Yes."

"Which battallion—first or second?"

"Second."

"Grenadiers, Fusiliers, or Coldstreams?"

"The former," he replied, with a smile.

"I knew most of the men," said Annie, musingly, "and yet I do not recollect your face."

"Possibly not, I have only been gazetted a year, and joined them at Montreal."

Seeing a waiter passing by she said "Bring me an army list."

"Yes, miss, replied the waiter.

"Shall I save you the trouble, and say I am the Marquis of Corinth?" he exclaimed, still smiling.

"Let me introduce you to my friend, Miss Sybil Dudley."

"Sybil having been introduced, Annie said—

"Well, we'll leave you together."

"Pray have compassion on us, cried Corinth, "we will be the humblest of your disciples."

"On that condition you may come, but I warn you I am an apostle who drinks most."

"That's a hint for Tindal."

"I do not require it, long experience has made me conversant with the ways of women," said Captain Tindal laughing.

The party had entered another room, elegantly furnished with velvet chairs and divans. A waiter brought a bottle of champagne for which Corinth threw down a sovereign telling him to keep the change, the obsequiousness of the waiter increased a hundred per cent. after that, though it was palpable enough before.

"So you have only just come from the country," said the Marquis addressing Sybil.

"I have been in town a very short time," replied Sybil.

All at once Annie beckoned to Sybil saying, "Sibby one moment; will you excuse me," she said.

"Certainly," replied the Marquis of Corinth.

Sybil went over to where Annie was sitting and bent down to hear what she said, which was as follows, and as it did credit to power of perception and knowledge of the world, we give it intact.

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Corinth I am told by Tindal is very rich, he has only been three days in England and is on the prowl for a woman. If he asks you who you are say the daughter of a clergyman, your education is good enough to pass for one, tell as many lies as you can remember and go in and win, I wish I had your chance."

"All right," replied Sybil.

She returned to the old place, and Corinth returned to the charge.

"Don't think me impertinent," "but I have an odd knack of asking questions, do you mind being questioned?"

"Not in the least," replied Sybil casting down her eyes

"Have you a large family?"



"I have none at all," said Sybil blushing.

"I did not allude to 'little strangers,' replied the Marquis showing his glittering teeth "I mean brothers and sisters and all the other rubbish of consanguinity."

"Oh! no, I am an only child."

"Is your father living?"

"Yes."

"What is he?"

"A clergyman in Kent."

"Indeed! what induced you to leave home?"

"I loved, not wisely but too well," said Sybil.

"Then your is the old story of implicit confidence on the one side, and cruel desertion on the other!" the Marquis said.

"Indeed it is not, Cheriton would have married me," cried Sybil, thrown off her guard,

"Cheriton!" repeated Corinth, "I remember that name somewhere."

"No doubt you saw an account of his murder at Gravesen."

"Oh! yes, that was it, and he was your *bon chevalier*, eh?"

"I am sorry to say so, do not please talk of him. The recollection of misery is always painful."

"The little heart flutters round the shade of the departed. Is it not hard to kill the memory of a first love?"

"It is impossible," replied Sybil emphatically.

"That is a frank confession, but I do not agree with you," said the Marquis, "your wound is still green, therefore you feel accurately, mine on the other hand is cicatrized."

"Yours!"

‘Why not?’

“Have you loved!”

“As fondly as ever man loved, but my idol sleeps in the grave.
Is there anything extraordinary in the fact?”

“Oh no, nothing,” replied Sybil hastily.

“I declare you two seem to be getting all into the dismal,
I have not heard you laugh once,” said Annie Harman.

“That is your fault,” rejoined Corinth.

“How so?”

“You should supply us with food for mirth.”

“I am not a travelling Punchinello, nor yet a perambulating clown,” answered Annie.

“You ought then to make sacrifices for your friends.”

“I don’t possess a self-immolating nature,” replied Annie.

The evening passed quickly. At last the time came for the Argyll to close, and the question arose as to where the party should adjourn.

“Will you come to my rooms in Mount-street?” said Captain Tindal.

“Shall we go the rounds?” suggested Annie.

“There are no rounds to go now, since the one o’clock act,” replied the captain.

“Kate’s is closed, and so is Mott’s; nocturnal revelers are forced to retire into private life.”

“I know one or two places where you can get some supper.”

“What are they?”

“Coney’s, Rose Young’s, and Clark’s.”

“We will put ourselves under your guidance then,” said Tindal.

"I think I shall start a night-house!" exclaimed Annie.

"You must first square the police."

"Oh, they all know me."

"What an honour!" laughed Tindal. "Fancy boasting of being known to the police."

"Never mind that; their acquaintance is of use sometimes," replied Annie, confidently.

"Now, gentlemen, if you please!" exclaimed the waiter, coming up.

"Going to turn us out, eh?"

"Yes, sir, time to shut up."

The Marquis of Corinth gave his arm to Sybil. Tindal did the same to Annie, and they left the Argyll together.

CHAPTER VII.

Going the Rounds.

FAST London, or London by Night, has been greatly shorn of its glories of late years. There are many men who will tell strange stories of the Finish in Bridges Street, Covent Garden, of the Shades, of Mother H's., of Sally Sutherland's in St. Alban's Place, the most exclusive of all night houses ; of the Cider Cellars, which died with poor old Baron Nicholson of facetious memory ; of the Coal Hole, once a renowned resort of the bloods and Corinthians of the time ; of Kate Hamilton's—dear old Kate, rotund and jovial—all gone—gone through the ivory gate. Dave Belasco, it is said, has established himself on the Boulevard des Capucines, in Paris, in which gay city of the sybarites champagne Kate must also be looked for. Minor stars of modern note, such as Lizzie Davis, the Count, Sam, Bessie Harvey, and others, have migrated to other localities like swallows at the approach of winter.

The magician has waved his wand, and all is changed. So changed as to make the metamorphosis resemble a dream.

It is unnecessary to exactly indicate the locality of Rose Young's. Suffice it to say that the party was thither conveyed in the brougham, that the attendant satellite at the door admitted them on recognizing Annie Harman, and that Jack Bennett, the presiding genius of the place, welcomed them heartily, and supplied them with unlimited champagne—at a price.

At one o'clock they saw fit to leave this convivial abode and

betake themselves to Coney's, where, no "obstacle" being in the way, they were admitted and hospitably entertained.

After this, supper became a necessity, and Clark's was sought. Mrs. Clark did her best for the travellers, in the "little room below," and her good-natured face beamed with the satisfaction she felt.

At three o'clock they adjourned to Tindal's rooms in Mount Street, Grosvenor Square, where a *recherche petit souper* did not await them, though the gallant captain could at a pinch provide as good a supper as any one. Wine, however, there was in abundance.

Under the influence of continued libations of Moët, Roederer, and Cliquot, the Marquis of Corinth became very amorously disposed. He put his arm round Sybil's waist, and attempted to draw her closer to him on the sofa on which they were sitting, but she repulsed him rather rudely, saying, "Don't do that, please."

"Why not, my darling?"

"Because I don't like it, and I never permit familiarities from strangers."

"Am I a stranger?"

"I cannot yet look upon you as a friend. I must see and know more of you."

"May I have the pleasure of calling," he asked.

"You may have the honour," replied Sybil, correcting him.

"I stand corrected, my dear Miss Dudley," he cried. "I meant to say the honour, but that was so intimately associated with the pleasure that I thought only of the latter."

"You may come as often as you like after that pretty speech."

"If what we have seen and done to-night is 'going the rounds,' I call it a very tame affair," exclaimed Captain Tindal.

"Put it all down to the one o'clock act," said Annie.

"Do you think that act has tended to diminish what is called vice," asked the Marquis.

"Not in the least, not an atom," responded Annie.

"Surely it is less glaring!"

"That is true, but in private it is as rampant as ever. Look at us, for example?"

"I hope we are not vicious," said Sybil, with a shrug of the shoulders which Corinth thought very feminine and pretty.

"What Annie says is perfectly true," remarked Tindal. "The history"—

"Oh, if you are going to be historical, I shall put on my night-cap," interrupted the Marquis.

"Only half a-dozen words."

"We will limit you."

"I was going to say," resumed Tindal, "that the history of successive ages proves conclusively, that any legislative enactment, suppressing public vice, only tends to increase private licentiousness and excess."

"Let us start a one o'clock club to evade the act," said Corinth.

"What's the use. They would not admit women," said Annie.

"*Tant mieux ma chère.*"

"Which means——"

"So much the better my dear."

Oh, you are a lunatic, we will get the fire-king to burn Cremorne in a grand bonfire."

"As I possess some of the properties of the Salamander, I am afraid his efforts in that direction would be futile, and unattended with any striking success."

"He shall try at all events, Willy," this to Tindal, "my glass is empty."

"*Mille pardons.*"

The Captain filled his fair friend's glass.

"I think," said Annie, who was slightly elevated, "some one ought to sing a song."

"Ask Corinth," replied Tindal, "he can sing like any nightingale."

"I have no objection to sing, but my songs are all dreadfully old-fashioned," said the Marquis of Corinth.

"They may be all the better for that."

"You shall judge for yourself."

Clearing his voice he sang the following well-known comic effusion of Southey :

THE WELL OF ST. KEYNE.

A WELL there is in the west country,
And a clearer one never was seen ;
There is not a wife in the west country
But has heard of the Well of St. Keyne.

An oak and an elm-tree stand beside,
And behind does an ash-tree grow,
And a willow from the bank above
Droops to the water below.

A traveller came to the Well of St. Keyne ;
Joyfully he drew nigh,
For from cock-crow he had been travelling,
And there was not a cloud in the sky.

He drank of the water so cool and clear,
 For thirsty and hot was he ;
 And he sat down upon the bank
 Under the willow-tree.

There came a man from the neighbouring town,
 At the Well to fill his pail ;
 On the Well-side he rested it,
 And he bade the stranger hail.

" Now art thou a bachelor, stranger ?" quoth he,
 " For, an if thou hast a wife,
 The happiest draught thou hast drunk this day,
 That ever thou didst in thy life.

" Or has thy good woman—if one thou hast—
 Ever here in Cornwall been ?
 For, an if she have, I'll venture my life
 She has drunk of the Well of St. Keyne."

" I have left a good woman who never was here,"
 The stranger he made reply ;
 " But that my draught should be better for that,
 I pray you answer me why "

" St. Keyne," quoth the Cornish-man, " many a time
 Drank of this crystal Well,
 And, before the angel summon'd her,
 She laid on the water a spell :

" If the husband—of this gifted Well
 Shall drink before his wife,
 A happy man henceforth is he,
 For he shall be master for life.

" But if the wife should drink of it first,—
 God help the husband then !"
 The stranger stoop'd to the Well of St. Keyne,
 And he drank of the water again.

" You drank of the Well, I warrant, betimes ?"
 He to the Cornish-man said :
 But the Cornish-man smiled as the stranger spake,
 And sheepishly shook his head.

"I hasten'd as soon as the wedding was done,
 And left my wife in the porch :
 But, i'faith ! she had been wiser than I ;
 For she took a bottle to church."

The conclusion of this song was hailed with general acclamation. The marquis sang in a clear rich voice, which was powerful yet melodious ; the company was unanimous in asking him to sing again.

"If I am a willing horse"—he replied, "you must not work me to death."

"Oh, do sing again !" cried Sybil.

"If *you* ask me I cannot resist ; what will you have ?" He cast a loving glance at Sybil.

"Anything you like," she replied, "if your taste is as good as your voice we shall have nothing to complain of."

"Then listen to a trifle of the elder Colman."

LODGINGS FOR SINGLE GENTLEMEN.

Who has e'er been in London, that overgrown place,
 Has seen "Lodgings to Let" stare him full in the face :
 Some are good, and let dearly ; while some, 'tis well known,
 Are so dear and so bad, they are best let alone.

Will Waddle, whose temper was studious and lonely,
 Hired lodgings that took Single Gentlemen only ;
 But Will was so fat, he appeared like a tun ;—
 Or like two Single Gentlemen rolled into one.

He enter'd his rooms, and to bed he retreated ;
 But, all the night long, he felt fever'd and heated ;
 And, though heavy to weigh, as a score of fat sheep.
 He was not, by any means, heavy to sleep.

Next night 'twas the same !—and the next !—and the next ;
 He perspired like an ox ; he was nervous, and vex'd
 Week pass'd after week, till, by weekly succession,
 His weakly condition was past all expression.

In six months his acquaintance began much to doubt him,
 For his skin like a lady's loose gown hung about him;
 Then he sent for a doctor, and cried like a ninny,
 "I've lost many pounds—make me well—there's a guinea."

The doctor looked wise,—“a slow fever,” he said,
 Prescribed Sudorifics and going to bed.
 “Sudorifics in bed!” exclaimed Will “are humbugs,”
 “I've enough of them here, without paying for drugs.”

Will kicked at the doctor—but when ill indeed,
 Even dismissing the doctor don't always succeed;
 Then calling his host, he said “Sir, do you know,
 I'm the fat single gentleman six months ago?”

“Look ye, landlord, I think—” argued Will, with a grin,
 “That with honest intentions you first took me in;
 But from the first night, and to say it I'm bold,
 I've been so very hot that I'm sure I've caught cold.”

Quoth the landlord “'Till now I ne'er had a dispute,
 I've let lodgings ten years, I'm a baker to boot;
 In airing your shirts, sir, my wife is no sloven,
 And your bed is immediately over my oven.”

“The oven!” says Will: says the host “why this passion,
 In that excellent bed died three people of fassion;
 Why so crusty, good sir?” “Zounds!” cried Will in a taking,
 “Who would not be crusty after half-a-year's baking.”

Will paid for his rooms, cried the host with a sneer,
 “Well, I've seen you've been going away half-a-year;”
 “Friend, we can't well agree,—yet no quarrel,” Will said,
 “But I'd rather not perish while you make your bread.”

“That is excellent,” exclaimed Annie; “I declare it is quite
 refreshing to hear anything like that after the cadlyries of the
 music-halls and negro abominations one is compelled to listen to.”

“Will you favor us Annie,” asked Tindal.

“Have I music in my soul?”

“You are the best judge of that.”

“I could sing once—for I'm a Scotch lassie,” replied Annie,

and we all of us, over the border, have a rough idea of minstresly, but since I've been knocking about town, my voice has got out of order, and my memory is defective."

"I for one, should esteem it a favor if you will make an effort," exclaimed the Marquis of Corinth.

"I will try, as you have been so good," she replied.

Her song was:—

THE SOLDIER'S DREAM.

Our bugles sang truce—for the night-cloud had lower'd
 And the sentinel stars set their watch in the sky ;
 And thousands had sunk on the ground overpower'd,
 The weary to sleep, and the wounded to die—
 When reposing that night on my pallet of straw,
 By the wolf-scaring faggot that guarded the slain,
 At the dead of the night a sweet vision I saw,
 And thrice ere the morning I dream'd it again.
 Methought from the battle-field's dreadful array,
 Far, far I had roam'd on a desolate tract :
 'Twas autumn—and sunshine arose on the way
 To the home of fathers, that welcomed me back.
 I flew to the pleasant fields, traversed so oft
 In life's morning march, when my bosom was young ;
 I heard my own mountain-goats bleating aloft,
 And knew the sweet strain that the corn-reapers sung.
 Then pledged me the wine-cup, and fondly I swore,
 From my home and my weeping friends never to part ;
 My little ones kissed me a thousand times o'er,
 And my wife sobb'd aloud in her fulness of heart—
 "Stay, stay with us—rest, thou art weary and worn !"
 And fain was their war-broken soldier to stay :
 But sorrow return'd with the dawning of morn,
 And the voice in my dreaming ear—melted away !

She sang with great pathos and all were affected by her simple manner.

"Campbell never wrote a prettier thing," said Tindal.

"As we are all getting sentimental," said Annie, "I think we had better go home."

"Is the brougham here?"

"Yes. I sent the man home to change his horse, but it must have returned some time."

Acting upon this hint, Sybil—who was very tired, got up; the Marquis assisted her with her shawl, and shortly afterwards they took their leave.

"I shall call without fail in the morning," whispered Corinth, to Sybil.

"Very well."

"Sutherland Street, I think you said."

"Yes, you know the number."

He nodded and the brougham drove off with its lovely freight.

"We have passed a charming evening," said Annie.

"Yes," replied Sybil as if she had not quite made up her mind about the matter.

CHAPTER VIII.

Angels in Muslin.

AT the theatre royal, Rural-lane, a gorgeous extravaganza was about to be produced. Ninety young ladies were to be employed, for the manager had declared that the success of the piece should depend entirely upon muslin, and—let it be spoken under one's breath—legs.

Consequently when Annie Harman and Louisa Reed, who had finally decided upon calling herself Sybil Dudley, and will be so designated for the future, applied under Patty Vyse's auspices for an engagement, their qualifications were enquired into.

Mr. Timothy Stormont, the ballet Master, was a very stout man with a German cast of countenance, the size of his legs was stupendous, he suggested nothing so much as the Colossus of Rhodes.

Tim and the manager of the theatre were sitting together over a bottle of sherry, when the girls arrived.

Matthew Patterson, the manager, was a jovial fellow, very fond of the ladies, if the stories current respecting him were to be believed.

"Hullo ! Patty," he cried, as the three girls entered, "what is your diminutive amusement?"

"If you mean my little game," she replied, "I can easily answer you."

"Suppose I do, what is it?"

"Plunder, as usual."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Stormant, "that's one for you Mat."

"Come here, you little devil," cried the manager, running after Pattie, who however pirouetted gracefully out of his reach.

"You have not introduced us to your friends," exclaimed Tim, looking admiringly at Sybil and Annie.

"You are not good enough," was Patty's reply.

"I am not at all bashful," said Sybil, "and I shall be happy to introduce myself as Miss Dudley and my friend here as Miss Harman."

"And they want to be put on in the pantomime," exclaimed Patty Vyse.

"It is not a pantomime, it is a fairy extravaganza," interposed Mat Patterson.

"Oh! I know, the Vestris sort of thing."

"You have heard it is to be all legs?" said Tim, looking at Sybil.

"I was not aware of the fact, but I dare say it will be none the worse for that," said Sybil.

"So you want to be put on, eh?" remarked Mr. Patterson.

"Yes."

"At a salary!"

"That is no object."

"Oh! I see; you would like to be in the front row with the leading ladies."

Sybil nodded her head.

"Very well, we will see what can be done for you; you

said you were not bashful just now, so you will not I hope be offended at what I am going to ask you to do."

"What's that?" asked Sybil, sharply.

"Just this, pull up your dress," said Mr. Patterson.

Sybil blushed up to the temples.

"Here, I will show you the way," exclaimed Patty Vyse, laughing, and pulled up her dress above her knees.

Sybil did the same at last, though with some reluctance.

The manager walked round her with the air of a connoisseur, and apparently satisfied, stood still.

"Shall I do?" asked Sybil.

"Well yes? I think we can make something of you: now miss!"

This to Annie Harman.

Annie was next imputed, also with a favourable result, and it was finally arranged that they should be put in as leading ladies, not to dance, but merely to posture and go through a few steps, the dancing being left to the professionals.

They had to go to rehearsal three times a week for a month, but this they did not object to. there were always a good many eligible men hanging about the wings, and with champagne and conversation the time passed pleasantly enough away.

One night having nothing to do, Annie Harman was restless, and prepared a visit to some place of amusement.

"Let's go somewhere," she said.

"Where?" asked Sybil with a yawn.

"Oh I don't know, have you ever been to the Holborn?"

"Never: I should like to go."

"Put on your dress then, and we'll start," said Annie.

When they were dressed they hired a cab, and started for the Holborn Casino, which, as everyone knows, is situated in Holborn, and frequented for the most part, by those who are fond of dancing.

It was originally a swimming bath. The arena in which dancing takes place is approached by a descent of a few steps. It is gorgeously fitted up with immense mirrors, and velvet covered sofas and seats, handsome carpets, gilding is everywhere conspicuous, and there are spacious galleries and wine rooms, with *buffets* for refreshment.

The band is excellent, perhaps not quite so perfect as that of the Argyll room, but nevertheless, deserving of commendation in no slight degree.

The master of the ceremonies is a bland and genial old gentleman, with grey hair and a predilection for dry sherry, which is an amiable weakness, common amongst M. C.'s generally.

As the girls entered the place by themselves, they attracted some attention from the male portion of the assembly, though the women turned up their noses and pretended not to see them, although carefully scrutinizing every portion of their wearing apparel and mentally criticising it.

Annie Harman conducted her friend to one of the wine rooms, and they sat down by themselves. Two young men were seated at a table not very far off, where they were indulging in a bottle of sherry and some cigars of questionable look and fragrance.

One of the young men—who was tall and dark, having the soft and delicate features of a woman, took very particular notice of Sybil.



"THE HOLBORN"

Hurriedly speaking a few words to his companion, he rose, and advancing to Sybil exclaimed: "would you like to sit down? if so, there is heaps of room at this table."

He pulled back a chair and offered it to her.

"Oh yes, I should like to sit down anywhere with you," replied Sybil.

"And your friend,"

"Yes she will do anything that I do."

The girls sat down, and their new acquaintance pressed them to take a glass of sherry, which Sybil refused.

"You do not like wine I suppose," said the young man.

"Indeed you are very much mistaken," answered Sybil.

"Then you do not consider it good enough here, is that it?"

"Not at all."

"You are a mystery; you like wine, you consider it good here, and yet you will not drink," exclaimed the young man in astonishment.

"I beg your pardon, I did not say I would not drink; I appeal to my friend here, who knows my habits: am I a tetotaller, Annie, or have I refused to imbibe?"

"If you are it is only within the last ten minutes," replied Annie Harman laughing.

"How very dull you are," continued Sybil, "did you never hear of champagne?"

"Of course," said the young man striking his forehead with his hand, "how could I have been so stupid;—waiter! a bottle of veuve cliquot and one of roderer."

The waiter hurried away to execute this rather extensive order.

"Let us pass away the time that must elapse before the wine arrives in introducing ourselves," suggested Sybil, "to begin : I am Miss Sybil Dudley, and this lady is my friend—my particular friend Miss Harman."

"I am Ralph Milton," said the young man.

"What are you?"

"Oh ! a great swell.

"Nothing else ? That is at least vague. I should not have imagined it from outward indication only. What is your friend?"

"I am Sampson ; people always call me Simpson," said Ralph Milton's companion, who was short, thick-set, and red as to his hair, face, and hands, "and I am a dustman."

Sybil laughed.

Simpson, as soon as the wine arrived, devoted himself to Annie, while Milton bestowed his attention exclusively upon Sybil, to whom he had evidently taken an immense fancy.

"What does your friend mean by saying he is a dustman?" asked Sybil.

"So he is ; his father is the great dust contractor, and he partly manages the business. They are very rich. I have not a hundredth part of the money he has."

"What a common looking fellow !"

"Well, yes ; he is not much to look at, but his heart's in the right place for all that. We were at school together, and he got me the place I now hold in the city."

"So you are a city clerk," said Sybil, with a slight laugh of disappointment in her tone.

"Is there anything objectionable in that!"

"Oh! no."

This was spoken with an air of animation intended to convey to his companion that there was something highly objectionable in it.

"If you are poor," she added, "why do you waste your money in champagne?"

"Because you wanted it," he replied naively.

"I wish I could have everything I wanted; that would be extremely agreeable. What an amiable man you must be, Mr. Milton."

"Only to those I take a fancy to."

"May I flatter myself that I am one of those happy beings?"

"That you confidently may."

"Do you often come here; your face is not familiar to me?"

He said, "I am an *habitué* of the Holborn. I have chambers in Furnival's Inn. A bachelor's life is very lonely, and I call the Holborn my drawing-room. I believe I come here pretty well every night.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Sybil, "this is my first appearance on the festive scene"

"Shall I have the happiness of seeing you again?"

"Will it be happiness?" she asked in a low, seductive tone

"Incomparable felicity, he replied, taking her hand in his.

She instantly withdrew it.

He grew red in the face and, stammered "May I call upon you."

"Well, I think not," she replied.

"How then shall we meet?"

"Come to the Theatre Royal, Rural-lane."

"When the great extravaganza in progress is out, and you will will have a box?" he eagerly cried.

"No."

"You will be in the dress circle?"

"No."

"The stalls?"

She shook her head; he was mystified again.

"I cannot accuse you of the pit or the boxes," he said, hesitatingly, "are you an actress?"

"Never mind, let it be sufficient for you that you will see me on the stage; then we can renew our acquaintance.

"I will be there with half-a-dozen bouquets."

"I shall wear a white camelia in my hair," Sybil added.

"We are going to dance," exclaimed Annie Harman.

"Can we do better than follow such a good example?" said Ralph Milton, bestowing an appealing glance upon Sybil.

She took compassion upon him, and laying her well-gloved hand lightly upon his arm they descended the stairs, and were soon whirling round to the inspiring air of a waltz.

She resolutely refused to dance any more, and finding that Annie Harman was rather tired of the dustman, persuaded her to come away.

The men of course insisted upon accompanying them, but to this Sybil raised an objection.

"Let us have supper somewhere?" suggested Simpson.

"Thank you! if we want any supper we are quite capable of ordering it for ourselves, and—"

"Paying for it, I have no doubt?" interposed Ralph Milton. But on this particular occasion we are ambitious of having the honour of your society, and we should esteem it a favour to be allowed to accompany you."

"Have we room in the brougham, Annie?" asked Sybil.

"Room for one, and the other can go on the box," replied Annie.

Verv well; if you like to consent to that arrangement—"

"With the greatest pleasure."

"That is settled, then."

They drove to the *Café de l'Europe*, and had a *recherché* supper there, which Simpson paid for, and the party separated a little after one in a state of—let us be charitable and say champagne.

CHAPTER IX.

A City Clerk.

On the eventful night when Sybil appeared as one of the first ladies in the wonderful extravaganza of King Kafoozleum and the fair enchantress of the Tomnoddly Mountains, or the Forty Syrens of the Fairy Realms of Everlasting Bliss. Ralph Milton was in the front row of the stalls, armed with a bill of the play and a double-barrelled opera glass.

He was by himself.

Simpson had in vain begged him to tell him where he was going but he could not be prevailed upon to give him the slightest insight into his movements.

The fact was he was in love with Sybil, and he did not wish his friend to know that his susceptibility had been touched.

The business of the evening soon began, King Kafoozleum appeared, so did the fair enchantress of the Tomnoddly mountains.

They both made a great sensation, which however, was as nothing compared with that created by the forty syrens.

The scenery representing the fairy realm of everlasting Bliss, was really splendidly designed and painted.

Rounds of applause followed. The audience became enthusiastic, and if they had been asked to pay twice over, it is not at all improbable that they would have done it.

Sybil appeared in the first row, and Ralph Milton's quick eye

soon picked her out from amongst the bevy of painted beauties, who solicited the admiration of the audience.

When the extravaganza was over he made his way to the stage door, and enquired for Miss Dulley.

She came to him at once looking radiant and lovely.

He paused—he had never seen anyone, one half so beautiful as this ravishing creature, who in her ballet dress, was more interesting still.

“I have to congratulate you,” he said, “upon a great and legitimate triumph.

“Oh! there was nothing wonderful in what I did.” replied Sybil, I only postured, I can’t walk on my toes, or anything of that sort.”

“Have you been long on the stage?”

“This is my first appearance.”

“Really!”

“I only did it for my own amusement you know, not for money,” explained Sybil.

“Is that the case with all the ladies of the ballet?”

“Oh dear no, we—that is, Annie, Patty Vyse, and a few others and I, are the *élite*; but where is your friend the Dustman?”

“He is not here.”

“So I perceive.”

“I did not ask him to come, because——”

He paused, the evident absurdity of the remark he was about to make, struck him forcibly.

“Well,” she said, raising her liquid blue eyes to him.

“Nothing.”

"I once heard a man say, that *nil* was represented by the \times in mathematics: am I getting too profound for you?"

"Not in the least—I was going to say that—that SIMPSON would have chaffed me.

"About what?"

He covered his eyes in evident confusion.

"Can you not answer my question?"

"About you," replied Ralph Milton in a low tone.

"How could he possibly have chaffed you about me?" asked Sybil.

"He would have sworn that I was spooney upon you"

"You are very young are you not?" asked Sybil quietly.

"Not very, I am twenty."

"That is a mere child. So you love me Mr. Milton."

Her eyes stared right into his and made his blood tingle.

"Oh! if I could only find words to express my adoration," he replied.

They were standing on the stage amidst vast masses of scenery, through which were divious paths; a dim light overshadowed the scene, making everything doubly romantic.

This young man had never met a lovely and accomplished woman of the world before; he was completely conquered by the meretricious attraction which vice has over virtue.

He had come in contact with women—what young man has not? he had sisters, cousins, friends, but all his people belonged to the middle class, and were not too well off. Rich and elegant attire, agreeable manner, an indescribable *je ne sais quoi* admitted, or rather forced him into a region of new sensations.

"Is this your first affair of the heart?" enquired Sybil

"Yes, indeed."

"Then my dear child you pay me a very poor compliment."

"Why?"

"Poor boy," she said abstractedly, with a compassionate air.

Ralph Milton trembled all over.

"Speak!" he cried, "tell me what you have to say."

"If you had loved a fashionable and attractive woman, whom one could look upon as a rival, to win you would be a triumph, but now, what have you to give?"

"Alas! but little."

"Certainly not money."

"How do you know that?" he exclaimed with a sudden flush.

"I have your own confession for it," she replied.

"We shall see," he said between his tightly clenched teeth, with the air of a man who has come to a sudden determination, regardless of consequences.

"You have no family," resumed Sybil.

"None to speak of," he answered gloomily.

"Where then, are your magnetic powers to attract a woman like myself?"

This was a home thrust.

"You forget that I have the wealth of my virgin affection to lavish upon you," he exclaimed hopefully.

"What is that," she said sarcastically.

"Is it not everything?"

"To me it is wearisome, I have gone through the stage of 'virgin affection.'"

"But you cannot be heartless."

"I am to some extent," said Sybil carelessly.

"Do you not care about being loved," he asked wonder-stricken.

"No. A man who loves you is a nuisance; he is always running after you; to get out of his sight is an impossibility. He is like a log tied round your leg, or a mill-stone round your neck."

"In Heaven's name what is it you do like?"

"I prefer being petted by a man who has loved, and who likes women, as he likes the other refinements of society, and the other luxuries of life;—but sentiment, oh! preserve me from a sentimental man."

"I am afraid I am sentimental, because I read poetry," said Ralph Milton with a sickly smile.

"And like it?"

"I am sufficiently weak to like it."

"You must change—you must undergo a metamorphosis, my dear friend!" said Sybil.

Her dear friend! she had called him her friend, and prefixed a loving adjection!

"Am I nothing more," he enquired.

"Than what."

"A friend."

"At present, no!"

"You are candid," he said with a mortified air, "but you hold out hope."

"Of what," said Sybil smiling.

"Of—of—I mean you did not say you never could love me."

"May I give you some advice."

"Most certainly."

"You are very young ; go home to your mother, tell her you have been foolish enough to fall in love with a woman who dances on the stage."

"No, no," he sighed, burying his face in his hands.

"Tell her also that the woman has nothing wonderful to boast of in the way of character."

"No, no, no," almost screamed Ralph Milton.

"But it is true ; in the great crisis of our lives we must look facts boldly in the face. I must tell you that a grand crisis in your life has arrived."

"I know it," he murmured.

"Go away from me. You will only make some huge mistake. You will only blot the fair page of your gay life."

"Oh ! oh," he cried. "this is too much."

"The tears streamed through his fingers like a miniature cataract.

"Be brave," she whispered.

"I cannot," he answered in a broken voice.

"You *must* be brave," continued Sybil "I have not yet done. You have a future before you, and I can see plainly that if you have anything to do with me, you will—

"Do not prophecy, leave your prediction unuttered. If a spirit were to come from the dead and tell me that, I should be utterly ruined in mind, body and reputation, yet would I love you."

Sybil could not help looking at this young man with something akin to admiration.

"Do you know your own heart?" she asked.

"What!" he cried, "do I know my own heart? Have I ceased to question and examine it for this month past?"

"Yet this is our second meeting."

"Does that matter? Are we not kindred spirits? Did not our souls rush together when we first saw one another?"

"This is sentimental nonsense," said Sybil gravely. "I am an average sort of woman, something a little superior to any you had seen before. You thought I was accessible because you met me at the Holborn and *voilà tout*."

"You are a goddess," he said.

"You will find your divinity of the earth, earthly I fear," replied Sybil with a sad smile.

"I would sell my soul to secure your love."

"Would you?"

"I call God to witness——"

"Hush!" said Sybil softly.

He was instantly silent.

"It is his fate," she murmured.

"Yes! yes!" cried Ralph Milton joyfully catching at her words, "It is my fate."

Taking a card from her pocket she gave it to him.

"There is my address," she said; "I am always at home in the morning."

He clutched it eagerly, and placed it in his breast.

Sybil tripped lightly away, and when he came to look for her she was gone.

The reaction now set in.

Ralph fell against some dirty scenery, and for half-an-hour was in a state of complete coma.

CHAPTER X.

Virgin Affection.

Ralph Milton had a friend. Most young men have friends ; his Pylades was a medical student living in lodgings in the highly respectable neighbourhood of Burton Crescent.

A short time after the scene we have detailed in the last chapter Ralph called upon his friend Tom Cook.

He had no special reason for calling upon Mr. Thomas Cook ; perhaps Furnival's Inn was not the liveliest place in creation, perhaps he was hipped, or perhaps the *furor* of dissipation was upon him.

Tom was sitting in an arm chair, with his feet on the fender. It was about eight in the evening ; he had his pipe in his mouth and was regarding the fire pensively.

The night was cold, and the wind whistled harshly without.

"Hullo !" cried Tom, as his friend entered the sitting-room occupied by him on the second floor, "Hullo ! old beans, come to look up your particular pal ?"

"Such is the object of my nocturnal visit," answered Ralph.

"Why, come here !" said Tom Cook, catching sight of his dejected appearance.

Ralph approached.

"Now put out your tongue ; h'm ! furred rather ; now give us

VIRGIN AFFECTION

your distinguished dexter flapper; pulse quick, feverish rather. Now, my young steam engine, it is my painful duty to inform you that you have been going it.

"No!" said Ralph.

"Ah! would you deceive your particular pal with a playful equivocation. It won't do, your P. P.'s too wide awake. Gammon buttered is his aversion, but gammon unbuttered! no go at all. You've been getting tight my young and intelligent friend."

"I really—"

"It *won't* do," persisted Tom, "your interesting and eloquent countenance proves it. Now this sort of caper must be put a stop to, it isn't the cheese."

"I swear I have not been out of my chambers for three days," exclaimed Ralph.

"Except to business, eh?"

"Not even to business."

"Oh! what made the chimney smoke?" asked Tom in his graplin language.

"I would rather not tell you."

"Not tell your particular pal, oh! shade of samon! come out with it, unburden your buzzum and let's hear your last dying speech and confession."

Ralph felt uncomfortable, he was really wretchedly ill, but he did not like even his friend to be acquainted with the cause.

He made no answer,

"Mr. Ralph Milton," said Tom.

"Well!"

"Am I your philosopher and friend?"

"You are I hope."

"Are you, being the weaker vessel, glad of a buffer to stand between you and the hard world?"

"If you like to put it so."

"Very well, then hear this, if you don't choose to unburden your oppressed mental faculties, I shall cut the concern, and then what will become of you?"

Ralph did not appear to be so overwhelmed at this awful prospect as he should have been.

Mr. Thomas Cook rose, and putting down his pipe, placed his hands upon Ralph's shoulders, and peered into his face, very much as Sayers may have pryed into the corner in which his doughty antagonist Heenan was lying, during the contest at Farnham.

Ralph's gaze fell.

"I'll tell you what it is my flower," exclaimed Tom Cook, "you've been getting spooney on a piece of muslin."

Ralph became as red as a scraped carrot.

"You've been hit my tulip, and hit hard too. Now who's the muslin, in the words put a name to the feminine?" continued Tom.

"Oh! Tom," cried Ralph, "I am glad after all that you have found it out, I have made I don't know how many distinct efforts to come and tell you, but—"

"Your maiden modesty would not let you."

"I felt that I had made a fool of myself."

"It's rather odd that you should go in for self and stultification," said Tom Cook with a puzzled air, "considering the able tuition

you've had. I always gave you credit for the possession of more than your share of common sense. I am fly to every move on the board, why a'int you?"

He paused a moment and then said: "It's a settler. It's a question I can't answer; but tell me about the feminine."

"She's an angel," broke in Ralph.

"Of course."

"And as lovely as Venus, Aurora, and——"

"Yes, yes, that is all taken for granted."

"And——"

"Well, go on, 'good' I suppose you were going to add."

"I was, but——"

"Unhappily she is not perfection, is that how the catsprings?"

"I am sorry to say it is," replied Ralph.

"Oh!" said Tom with a sagacious nod, "I can see through a brick wall as far as most people, oh! your inamorata; a singed moth, a soiled dove, an anonyma, and——"

"An actress."

"That's nothing in her favour," exclaimed Tom.

"At least,—permit me to qualify that remark. There are good girls on the stage of course, but the majority generally, are very dickey, and the worst of them is, they are so infernally clever. It's their profession and game to act, and shiver my scalp—excuse the expression, it's—it's original if it's nothing else,—if they ca'nt make a man believe anything."

"You have never known what it is to be in love, Tom," sighed Ralph.

"Mr. Milton you are in error," replied Tom.

"I didn't know——"

"Of course you didn't, it happened before you and I became Siamcse; but if you think I have never wandered in the flowery paths, you make a highly cultivated and blooming error."

"I beg your pardon," said Ralph.

"Then you won't get it—that's flat, and so are you, in comparison with this Miss Sharp. To tell me that I've never been a cupidinous ass! why! have'nt I got a lock of hair, a back tooth wrapped in tissue paper, a pocket-handkerchief dirty, with the initials S. E. in one corner, a few faded flowers and a boot-lace, and yet I've never been spooney—God help the man!"

"I trust I have not aroused painful emotions."

"But you have, my good sir; the emotions you have aroused are more than usually painful."

"Let us hope she sleeps in peace."

"What do you mean," said Tom with his eyes wide open.

"I suppose—that is, you ought—you do I mean—a—lay flowers and those things on her grave."

Tom burst into a hoarse fit of laughter.

"Grave be bothered," he cried, "she's alive and kicking, don't alarm yourself, don't you flurry your superfluous fat, my juvenile Juggins—she's the hale and hearty mother of five children, in not one of whom, can I claim the remotest paternity."

"She did not love you and married another. Is that what I am to understand?"

"Precisely."

"That's dreadful

"Isn't it awful," said Tom with a grin, which by a Colman would have been termed broad.

"You don't know how I love this woman," said Ralph feelingly.

"Does she love you?" was Tom's pertinent question in reply.

"She didn't tell me so."

"It wasn't likely. What did you infer from her manner?"

"That she liked me but she did not think our coming together would be of service to either of us."

"She's a clever woman, Ralph my boy. Steer clear of her. Cut her dead and leave town for a week. I have a small balance at my bankers, it is yours if you like to take it.

"Many thanks old fellow," replied Ralph, "I should be glad to accept your generous offer under other circumstances, but I am afraid that we are fated to be very dear to one another."

"Humbug!" emphatically remarked Tom.

"Napoleon is a fatalist."

"So much the bigger donkey he."

"Don't you believe in such things," asked Ralph.

"About as much as I do in the man in the moon. As we make our beds we lie on them."

"You'd lie anywhere," said Ralph with a smile.

"That's a mild joke, and one you ought to be ashamed of," replied Tom re-seating himself in his arm chair and filling his pipe.

"Bring yourself to an anchor."

"Have you any liquor?"

"Oceans."

"In the usual place?"

"Yes, unless my dog's wife of a landlady has been at it again. Take it out if you don't mind. You want lushing up. You're a cup too low."

"Half-a-dozen cups."

Ralph produced from a sideboard a bottle of whisky and with the aid of hot water, lemons and sugar, made some excellent punch.

"Is the facetious beverage agreeable to your internals," asked Tom.

"Very much so."

"Then give us a toast."

"Better luck still," said Ralph.

"Allow me to supplement that with 'Wine and women, the two greatest curses and blessings in the world.' There is a paradox for you."

After this Tom urged his friend to tell him the history of his meeting and connection with Sybil which he did unreservedly.

At the end of the recital, Tom shook his head.

"Cut her," he said solemnly.

"I can't," replied Ralph.

"Then it will be Jack up the orchard with you.

"It must be so then," answered Ralph resignedly.

"Ralph," said Tom on hearing this communication.

"Yes."

"You're an ass."

With this declaration he puffed away at his pipe in gloomy silence.

CHAPTER XL.

Oysters at Scotts.

"It is no use sitting here moping like a couple of owls in an ivy bush," suddenly exclaimed Tom Cook.

"Not a bit," was Ralph's laconic answer.

"Let's go somewhere?"

"I'm game to go anywhere," said Ralph.

"What do you say to the Barn.

"I've no objection."

"All right! wait half a tick while I array myself in gorgeous attire, and we'll be off to Highbury."

When Tom had arrayed himself in a shooting suit and a pair of dogskin gloves, which he called "bow-wow's coats, a cab was hailed, and they started for the place of amusement they had selected.

Highbury Barn, under the management of the present proprietor, Mr. Giovanelli, has assumed a high rank amongst places of its description.

In point of popularity it is second only to Cremorne, which indeed owes much of the estimation in which it is held to its situation. The dancing and ball-room at Highbury is really a magnificent erection, unsurpassed in the metropolis. In summer the grounds, though not very spacious, are tastefully laid out, and the crystal platform is excellently adapted for those who like dancing in the open air.

"I like riding in a shuffle," said Tom, "you go along so easily."

"Yes! it is ever so much better than a growler," answered Ralph.

"I say!" cried Tom, "I'm going in for a little of the light fantastic."

"Are you! I shall sit still and smoke."

"The devil you will?" said Tom in astonishment, "will it be high treason to your lady love to walk with, look to, or talk at any other woman?"

"I'm not in the humour."

If I were married to the most beautiful woman in the world to-morrow I would not give up my liberty. If I liked to have a little harmless flirtation with a girl I'd have it *mal cœlum*.

It was not long before Tom had "picked up a nice little bit," as he said. After a couple of dances he walked with her up to Ralph, saying, "Come along, old fireworks, we're going to lush up, I'll brandy-and-water you."

Seeing excuse would be of no avail, Ralph complied, cheerfully underwent the agreeable process of being lushed up, and looked as much like a disconsolate lover as he could.

"Your friend does not look very well?" said the young lady whom Tom had favoured with his transitory regards.

"He's a lively sort of pup, isn't he?" was Tom's complimentary reply.

"Has he been drinking?"

"Not he; the fact is his spoony woman's given him the sack turned him up, you know."

"Oh!" said the young lady, as if she thoroughly understood everything now.

This girl was a type of a numerous class. She worked hard during the day, and came out in the evening to enjoy herself and have a little relaxation. As a seampstress she earned very little, and if she augmented her income at the expense of her chastity she had some excuse for her actions.

A life of indigent virtue is not attractive to women, and until some lucrative employment for the female part of our population is discovered, there will always be a large number of girls who are compelled to traffic in their honour in order to support life.

As it is here so it is in America, from which country some people are too apt to look for guidance. Some remarks, founded upon some statistics published in an American paper, the *New York Independent*, will be found highly interesting to the reader of "London by Night."

Growing tired of the delights of the Barn, Tom proposed that they should hook it from this crib," to which his companion—who was in the humour to assent to anything, and everything, agreed.

"Come to the theatre," said Ralph, "You shall see Sybil."

"I would go from here to Moscow, to behold your divinity," replied Tom.

They arrived at the theatre just as the great extravaganza was over.

Ralph sent in his card and was told to go into the green-room; here he found a noisy, laughing crowd of *artistes* and their friends, champagne was not only flowing but overflowing.

He could not repress a pang of jealousy which darted through his breast, as he saw that Sybil—*his* Sybil, was "surrounded by

half-a-dozen men, who seemed to vie with one another in the attentions they paid her.

Men too, so different in manner and appearance from the men *he* knew.

They were not the sort of men included in *his* set.

"Which is the feminine fire-brand who has kindled a flame in your amorous heart," asked Tom in his usual peculiar and selected language.

"That one," replied Ralph, indicating Sybil by a movement of his hand.

"A develish pretty girl too," was Tom's muttered comment.

"But I say old 'coon'," he added.

"What?"

"There dosen't seem to be much chance for you."

"Why not?"

"She's six deep in swells."

"Never mind. Wait till I speak to her."

Ralph confidently walked up to Sybil, who on recognizing him, held out two fingers.

"How did you get on to night," he asked.

"Walked on when I was called," she replied with a smile.

"I dont mean that," he replied sheepishly.

"Are you going to stand anything?" asked Sybil.

"What would you like?"

"Some champagne I suppose, anything,—sparkling 'fiz' is the usual thing. Call Cupid."

Cupid was the call boy, and he, on receiving a sovereign from Ralph, condescended to fetch a bottle of 'fiz.'



"SCOTT'S"

Tom kept at a distance.

"I'm not wanted," he muttered.

To occupy his time he made violent love to a *coryphee*, who was alone, and who appeared flattered by his attentions.

Sybil went up-stairs to dress after a time, and on coming down told Ralph if he was good she would have some supper with him.

"May I ask Tom," said Ralph.

Sybil hereupon evinced a laudable anxiety to know who and what Tom was.

"He is a medical student, and my friend, you know," explained Ralph.

"Indeed!"

"There he is."

"Talking to that thing in paint and no petticoats, as Corinth calls the ballet girls?" asked Sybil, with a gesture of disgust.

"Yes."

"He seems a decent sort enough, and may come, but I won't have the woman."

Ralph went to Tom and said "We're going to have supper."

"Where?"

"Scott's, I suppose."

"I'll come!"

"Are you going to take your friend there?" queried Ralph in a whisper.

"Why not?" exclaimed Tom.

"Sybil says she won't have her," answered Ralph in some confusion.

"Then tell Sybil, with my compliments, that we can go by ourselves ; we are not particularly anxious to have the distinguished honour of her company."

Ralph flushed.

The "thing in paint and no petticoats" overheard this dialogue. She was one of the ladies of the ballet who were paid so much a week for their services, and she hated Sybil and her friends because they were thought so much more of than herself.

"The stuck up piece of goods !" she exclaimed indignantly, "she wants to treat everyone like dirt ; I heard one of her friends call us 'bits of muck' the other day."

"Never mind, my angel," said Tom, "we'll have a feast of our own.

Giving her his arm he conducted her to the foot of the stairs leading to the dressing-room, and there waited for her.

Ralph's trials were beginning. Through Sybil he had quarrelled with his friend.

They went in a cab to Scott's, and taking possession of a box, ordered oysters unlimited.

Scott's, as most London people know, is an oyster shop at the top of the Haymarket, probably the best shell fish shop in the metropolis, if we except Pimm's, in the Poultry.

After passing through the shop in which the oyster counter is situated, the lover of the popular mollux can have his bivalves either up or down stairs. The room below is long, though not spacious, and capable of containing from thirty to forty persons.

"So your friend preferred his *coryphee* to my society?" said Sybil.

"It looks like it," replied Ralph.

"What did he say?"

This was a woman's question all over.

Ralph, however, required a great deal of pressing before he would betray Tom.

"If you don't like to tell me you need not," said Sybil.

Thereupon he told her.

"He is some wretched cad or other, was the first remark I made to myself when you came into the green room together," exclaimed Sybil.

"Oh! no; he's a nice fellow when you know him."

"As I never intend to know him I am not likely to be able to decide upon his good or bad qualities," she replied.

"But—"

"Don't talk about him, the beast! you will only make me angry."

Ralph was annoyed, but he loved Sybil, and had not strength of mind enough to behave as he should have done.

CHAPTER XII.

Lobe in a Cottage.

Merton !

A small village some few miles from London, easily accessible by railway *via* the Wimbledon station.

This was where Mr. and Mrs. (*soi disant*) Ralph Milton pitched their tent.

Yes. It had come to that, Ralph had laid such pertinacious siege to Sybil that she consented to live with him as his wife.

He took a small cottage at a low rent, and furnished it. How he got the funds she did not know, nor did she care. It was no business of hers ; she never asked men how they got money so long as she got what she required.

She had a pony chaise to drive about in, and was able to ask her friends to come and see her, which they did in shoals.

People well off and able to give dinners and supply wine will always have acquaintances whose name is legion.

Nevertheless it did more than once strike her as odd that a man in Ralph's position should be able to keep her in the style in which they lived.

The extravaganza had come to an end.

Mr. Harford, the author, had another in preparation, and Sybil had asked him to come and see her at Merton.

"We can give you a bed," she exclaimed.

"Oh! thanks," he replied, "a truss of straw, a shake-down of any kind will do."

When Ralph went up to town in the morning she said:—

"I've asked Harford down."

"Who's he?" said Ralph.

Why the literary swell, you know. The man who wrote *King Kafoozleum*, the thing I danced in. Now do you know?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'd better bring some fish and things down with you."

"All right."

Harford and Ralph came down in the same train together, but as they did not know one another they walked nearly side by side to Merton, when Harford said—

"Can you direct me to Castle Cottage?"

"I'm going there myself. Is your name Harford?" said Ralph with a smile.

"It is."

"You are my guest then; happy to see you sir; my wife has spoken in terms of high eulogy of your numerous works.

"Very kind of her, I'm sure."

"Have you anything new in hand?"

"A burlesque for the *Loyalty*."

"Indeed! its title—"

"Is '*A Wife to Order*.' I have the opening scene in my pocket, and shall be glad to read it to you after dinner."

It is needless to say that Mr. Harford was as good as his word.

When the cloth was removed he produced a manuscript and exclaimed, "I promised Mr. Milton that I would read him the

opening scene of 'A Wife to Order. Will it bore you? If so—"

"Not in the least, only too pleased, said Ralph.

"If it worries me, replied Sybil, I shall soon tell you, and then you'll have to use the pruning knife."

"I'm not very fond of the P. K.," said Mr. Harford, but as it is only the first scene it won't take five minutes in reading."

Opening his MSS. he began in a rich melodious voice :—

A WIFE TO ORDER.

A Burlesque. Act 1. Scene 1. A handsomely-furnished apartment in the King of Cashmere's Palace. The King and his three Sons discovered. Servitors are at a distance.

King Persepolis *log.* "My children three advance and let me know
How quickly you will be prepared to go
To foreign climes where may perchance be seen
A woman worthy to be made my queen ;
For from our royal kingdom of Cashmere
Beauty has vanished to another sphere.
But one pretty girl the land can boast,
And she, alas ! is dearer than a post.
What can we do when obstacles beset us ?
We would be married, if the Fates would let us."

Prince Marigold. "Papa ? "

King P. "My dear ? "

Prince M " 'Twould more befit your station
To leave unmade this public declaration."

King P. "Silence ! What e'er we do is our concern.
Your duty to your Pa you'd better learn."

Prince M. "Your pardon, sir, I fancied I could sight a
Busy person called a short-hand writer.
Yes ; I'm right ; I'm positive I saw him
At a desk with pen and ink before him.
And you'll find it difficult to escape a
Concise report in to-morrow's paper."

King P. "Ha! Is't so? At once turn out that man."

[Servitors make a slight confusion as if ejecting some one.]

Prince Amadine. "It will be noised all over Hindostan,
And make the people wonder why a high king
Cannot find a wife unto his liking."

King P. "You're right. And since Prince Marigold's so pressing,
I pardon, and present him with my blessing.
Let me repeat, I want a pretty wife,
A sweet, cool-tempered partner for my life.
A year is all the time I can allow.
If you're longer there'll be a jolly row.
Now mind! you must bring a creature wondrous fair,
With soft blue eyes and shining yellow hair.
'That's my style."

Prince Pearl. "If for that he tarries
I fear 'twill be a long time ere he marries."

P. Marigold "I hear just now 'tis all the rage in Paris."

King P. "One word more."

P. Marigold "A dozen, if you please.
We're in no hurry."

King P. "You, like busy bees,
Must roam about the world, and in no case
Pass by a peerless, fascinating face.
The Prince who brings the long wished for fair one,
Incomparable and very rare one
Shall receive—"

Prince M. "What?"

Prince A. "What?"

Prince P. "What?"

King P. "I don't exactly know—
I'll think it over while you are gone."

Prince M. Oh!
What a shame, we must have some reward, or
We don't get you a wife to order."

Song, trio. Air —

“It is very clear
The King of Cashmere
Is anxious to marry a wife.
But us he must pay
Ere we start away
To find him a partner for life.”

King Posepolis.

“Undutiful boys.
This me much annoys,
You wrong your poor old father.
You know that to hold,
My well beloved gold,
Oh ! I would very much rather.”

The Princes.

“To travel about
Some money without
Is a thing we cannot do, sire,
Unless you come down
As befits your crown
For you we never can woo, sire.”

King P.

“As you are so bold
You shall have gold,
Though it's wringing my beating heart.
For every one knows
I am one of those
Who dislike with money to part.

(Quartette.)

Princes. Yes, us he must pay, ere we start away

King. Oh ! yes I must pay, ere you start away

To find ^{him}
me a partner for life.

[*enter Shaprachan.*]

King P. log. “Ha ! you are welcome, with you I wish to to speak,
Where have you been since this day week ?

Shap. “In the country, sire.”

King P. “Pray what called you there ?”

Shap. “Some sweet blue eyes and wondrous golden hair.”

King P. “Now by my crown all this is passing strange,
Did you with the maiden everything arrange ?”

Shap. "Why, no—"

King P. "Eh ! what ! your head for this shall pay
Blue eyes ! golden hair ! he's let them slip away."

Shap. "One moment, sire—"

King P. "Speak, wretch, you have not long to live
For your base lip, I would not sixpence give."

Shap. "Oh ! sire, my heart was filled with noble pride
As up to this very lovely maiden's side
With noiseless motion I contrived to glide—
Her hair I touched, and—"

King P. "Well, speak ! quick ! what then ?"

Shap. "Growing bolder, I did the same again,
But as I stroked her lovely auburn tresses
I promised her half-a-dozen bran new dresses,
A tiny phial she from me vainly tried
In the rich curtain's spacious folds to hide
And then I found—"

King P. "Oh ! what ?"

Shap. "Her hair she dyed."

King P. "Confusion ! Get thee gone ! out of my sight
I do not want to hurt you, but—I might :
To the treasurer go, and bid him send
As much money, as my sons can spend
Within one whole year. Let there be no stint,
We can always coin more at our royal mint."

Shap. sings. "Give me money, money, money, money,
Give me money all day long,
With human bees it is the honey
They do gather all day long."

[*exit Shaprachan.*]

King P. "And now my boys once more yourselves I bless
And wish you all unlimited success ;
Bring me a wife p'raps will be to my mind
And you shall find me preternaturally kind."

Prince Marigold. We travel with your interest at heart
And though it grieves us very much to part,

We hope again in twelve months time to meet
And throw ourselves at your paternal feet."

Prince Amadine. We'll ransack Asia for the fairest fair,
And most discreetly take the utmost care
The blushing damsel does not dye her hair."

Prince Pearl. "Good bye, papa, though youngest of the three
Be not anxious—leave everything to me;
I'll find the fairest girl that e'er was seen
And bring her safely back to be your queen."

King P. "Bless you."

[*kisses Pearl.*

Amadine. "And me."

King P. "Bless you."

[*kisses him.*

Marigold. "And me."

King P. "Bless you."
"I cant kiss you, I'm tired, there ! that will do."

Marigold. "Oh ! what an old bear, I've a good mind
To let him go himself a wife to find."

[The three Princes exit one after the other, leaving the King alone. He paces up and down the stage impatiently.]

King P. "Upon my word its more than I can bear :
Wy have all my subjects got black hair ?"

[Sits down, buries his face in his hands and weeps. Then he goes off evincing signs of grief.

"Do the princes get the old king a wife ?" asked Sybil, when he had concluded.

"Oh ! yes ; it's a fairy story, and—shall I tell it you.

"No thanks," exclaimed Sybil, "I've had enough for one time, the rest will keep. I'll read a critique for your sake when the piece comes out."

She had scarcely finished speaking before a knock was heard at the door, and Annie Harman entered.

"I must apologize for coming at so late an hour," said Annie, "but we are old friends, and—"

"Don't say a word," cried Sybil, kissing her, "I am delighted to see you."

CHAPTER XIII.

A Quiet Evening.

"What were you doing when I came in," asked Annie, when she had removed her bonnet and cloak and smoothed her hair.

"We were having a quiet evening," replied Mr. Harford.

"What does that mean, telling stories?"

"To some extent, yes. I have been reading the first scene of my new burlesque."

"When I have had something to eat I will tell you a story," said Annie.

"About what?"

"A ballet girl. The story will show you how two girls became dancers."

This proposal was hailed with acclamation.

"Are you engaged anywhere now, Annie?" asked Sybil.

"Yes, at the Alhambra."

"Really!"

"I like it better than the big theatres."

"Why?"

"Oh! I hardly know. It is more fun. The canteen is a great pull."

"What is the canteen?" said Sybil.

"Don't you know?"

"I have been there," said Mr. Harford.



THE ALHAMBRA CANTEEN

"It is a refreshment counter for the ballet girls," explained Annie. "When we come off we go into the canteen, and generally find some swells there who stand any amount of champagne."

"I should like to go."

"Come some evening. Ask for me at the stage door in Castle Street, and they will let you in."

Sybil accepted this invitation, and the cloth being cleared, Annie drank a glass of port, and drew her chair near the fire.

"How about this story?" asked Ralph.

"You shall have it."

"Give us something new and original," said Mr. Harford.

"I could not give you anything else, I have not an atom of plagiarism in me."

"I wish I could say as much," muttered Mr. Harford *sotto voce*.

"Annie is the most original being out," observed Sybil.

"In that case I must cultivate her acquaintance," said Mr. Harford.

"What! with a mercenary motive?"

"Why not?"

"Silence," cried Annie.

The men filled their pipes. Sybil leant back in her chair. Annie coughed, and told the story of Bella the ballet girl.

"Were you acquainted with the girls?" said Sybil, who had been deeply interested in the narrative.

It made her think of Gravesend, of Guy Cheriton, of Matthew Collins, and her young days.

"I was one of them," answered Annie with a smile.

"Were you, really; which of them?"

"Della," said Annie, blushing.

"If it is not a rude question," exclaimed Mr. Harford, "did you ever see Lord Lorchester again?"

"Yes, often ; he is always good for fifty pounds, if I want it."

"That's not so bad, either," remarked Ralph.

"Not at all. I shouldn't object to a few Lord Lorchesters," said Sybil, laughing.

CHAPTER XIV.

An Arrest at the Crystal Palace.

The establishment at Merton was conducted upon nearly the same principle for a considerable time. To be precise, we will say three months and a fraction over.

Messrs. Winter and Crisp, the bullion merchants in whose house Ralph Milton was, increased their exemplary clerk's salary, and said they had no fault to find with him.

Yet Ralph was always more or less short of money. He did get money somehow, but there were times when the exchequer was lamentably low.

It was breakfast time.

Breakfast consisted of haddocks, eggs, ham, sardines, and water-cresses, Devonshire cream, strawberry jam, shrimps, and French rolls with Aylesbury butter.

Not so bad for a clerk in the City on £200 a year.

"I say, old fellow," exclaimed Sybil.

"Well," ejaculated Ralph.

"I shall want some money before you go to town."

"What for?"

"How can that possibly interest you? I want it; that's enough."

"I gave you ten pounds yesterday," said Ralph in a tone of evident annoyance,

"What is that?" said Sybil contemptuously.

"A great deal to a man in my position."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed Sybil very gravely, "you should have thought of all this before. If you can't afford to keep me you should have told me so, and I would have got some one else to do so."

"Some one else!" repeated Ralph with a stare of blank amazement.

"Yes; do you suppose you are the only man in the world?" replied Sybil laughing.

"Not exactly."

"I warned you, did I not?"

"Well, yes, that is true enough."

"And then you uttered some nonsense about fate. Keeping a woman is an expensive luxury. If you can't afford luxuries you should wait till you can before you indulge in them."

"How cruelly you talk, Sybil."

"Cruelly! not at all."

"Indeed you do," he continued reproachfully.

"I don't see it. I can't go on without money."

"You shall have it; only don't say unkind things; that's all," said Ralph in a desperate tone.

"I am only speaking the plain truth; you are too great a coward to face and hear it."

"I believe I am; Tom Cook says so."

"Tom Cook!" she said angrily. "You are always throwing Tom Cook at me. If you like Tom Cook better than you do me you had better go and live with him."



THE CRYSTAL PALACE

"You are jealous of my friends."

"Such friends! Why don't you have gentlemen for your friends? I could get on with them."

"Does your jealousy arise from caprice, or from love for me?" he asked, evading her question.

"Certainly not from the latter.

"And yet I love you passionately. Does not my love beget a similar feeling in your breast?"

"Oh! don't talk spooney sentimental nonsense; you'll lose your train."

"But, Sibby, dear—"

"Rubbish! Go and get the money; and mind you are engaged on Thursday evening."

"What for?"

"Have you forgotten?"

"It would appear so."

"What a wretched memory you must have," Sybil said with a sigh of disgust.

"You worry me so, you drive things out of my head."

"Men ought not to be worried."

"Take compassion upon me, and tell me what the engagement is for, upon my word I have not the remotest idea."

"More shame for you, then; did not you promise to go to the Crystal Palace too see the fireworks?"

"Of course, how stupid I am," cried Ralph.

"Have you only just discovered that?"

"Well I'm off, Sibby, I shall be back in the evening."

"Early?"

"Yes."

"With the money?"

"If there's any in the Bank of England."

"There's a good boy. Kiss me before you go."

He kissed her, and a tear trembled on his eyelid.

"You goose," she cried as she perceived it, "Don't for goodness sake be nonsensical."

"I can't help it, Sibby, you'll kill me."

"There! go along, do," she said, pushing him out of the door and leaving him to put on his coat in the passage by himself.

When Ralph got to town, instead of going straight to the city he hired a cab and drove to Burton Crescent to see Tom Cook.

Tom had just got up, and was making coffee.

"Ah! old flick," he cried, "broken your silken fetters yet?"

"No," said Ralph, shaking his head mournfully.

"What's the diminutive amusement now?"

"I'm out of cash, and—"

"Hard up, eh?"

"Very."

"Want some coin, eh?"

"Awfully badly."

"Awfully badly," repeated Tom, putting his hands into his pockets, suspending his operations, and staring at his friend.

"Is'nt it beastly to be driven into a corner?"

"Very, uncle's handy though."

"I have not a thing in the world to pawn but what she would miss, and I couldn't look small before her for anything in the world."

"You wouldn't? so you've come to your particular pal for some bullion?"

"That's it."

"What is the figure?"

"Twenty pounds."

"A score of quid," said Tom, "well I haven't got it."

Ralph looked amazed.

"And if I had I would not lend it you."

"Why?"

"That's flat, isn't it."

"Why?" asked Ralph a second time.

"Because it's for her, and the sooner that connection is severed the better for you, my hearty.

"I don't see what the devil business you have to mix yourself up in my affairs," cried Ralph angrily, though he felt that his friend was perfectly right.

"You came to me, and I always speak my mind."

"Then it's a d—— nasty habit."

"So it is, when the remarks are true, for they are the more likely to be unpalatable to those to whom they are addressed."

"What am I to do?" groaned Ralph in despair.

"Cut it."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I—I love her," sighed Ralph.

"You great big overgrown calf, can't you—but I won't abuse you, sit down."

"What's the good if you won't lend me any money," said Ralph with a mortified air.

"I want to speak to you, we may just as well have it out now as we are on the subject. How do you suppose this is to end, young man?"

"I don't know," replied Ralph.

"Never thought about it I suppose."

"Never."

"That's prudent. You admit that you are two possums up a gum tree now?"

"Very likely we shall pull through it, only she's so very extravagant."

"Those women always are."

"She may reform, when she sees retrenchment is urgently needed."

"Not she; lightly come, lightly go, she doesn't care a dump about you, when you can't supply her wants she'll get somebody else."

"I don't know that," answered Ralph.

"But I do. Now I'll ask you another question. *Where* do you suppose this will end?"

"In Whitecross Street, I suppose you mean."

"Mind it's no worse," said Tom solemnly.

"Oh, don't jaw and preach and worry me, unless you want to drive me mad. Bring out some liquor if you have any, I'm as flat as ditch water."

Tom gave him some spirits and let him help himself.

"That's another bad habit you have contracted from your precious Sibby. I never knew you to drink anything, bar a glass of beer, before the afternoon. You'll have the delicious tremblings if you go on at that rate."

"Oh! I'm not afraid of D. T." said Ralph valiantly.

"Your hand trembles already."

"I wish I had not called upon you."

"It may be good for you in the end, if you will take advice and not be led by an *ignis fatuis* which will eventually swamp you."

"I'm not such a fool as I look."

"No, you're a much bigger one than people would think, to look at you. It's dreadful to me, to see a young man going head-long to ruin—as you are going; are not you sacrificing your future? Ain't you making all your friend's and relations' hair stand on end? and all for what?—a moth, a butterfly, an abandoned woman—whose prey you are."

"I love her," murmured Ralph.

"She will make a George Barnwell of you."

"Tom!" cried Ralph, his eyes flashing angrily.

"Well."

"You shan't talk to me like this, you have no right to do it. I will go out of your place and never come into it again."

"That will be a severe blow certainly, but it won't quite break my heart. Sit down and have your breakfast. There my lad is my fist."

Ralph stood aloof.

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

"Should you liked to be talked to as—"

"Frankly no," interrupted Tom, "and I shouldn't have done it if I hadn't taken so much interest in you, as if you were my own first born kid. Have your breakfast."

" I couldn't touch a bit."

" Off your feed ? "

" Yes, I eat nothing at home."

" Well, go and do your work, and tell Sibby with my compliments that she must do without that new dress or whatever it may be."

Ralph shook his head and made his exit sadly.

" Without the sinews of war no campaign can be prosecuted," was Tom Cook's exclamation.

We must now skip over the intervening days, and come to the eventful Thursday upon which Sybil and Ralph were going to the Crystal Palace.

Thursday evenings at the Crystal Palace were becoming fashionable. The Palace was lighted up at dusk, and the visitors could promenade till ten o'clock at night, a grand display of fireworks took place.

Sybil was enchanted at all she saw.

" Oh ! this is charming," she exclaimed.

Crowds of well dressed people walked up and down the nave, and under the transept, passing and re-passing each other.

" How did you get on in the city to-day," asked Sybil.

" Pretty well," returned Ralph, who looked very unwell.

" How pale you are."

" Am I," he said with a sickly smile.

" Awfully, you look wretchedly ill ; can't you contrive to run down to Brighton for a week ? "

" I fear not ; business is brisk now."

" My own dear pet," exclaimed Sybil, " I am very naughty to

worry you, I never think that you are slaving all day in the city, and for me too."

"Bless you," whispered Ralph, with a soft pressure of the hand.

Suddenly a man stopped before Ralph, and looked earnestly at him.

"Perhaps you will know this gentleman again," said Sybil much annoyed at his impertinent curiosity.

"Mr. Milton I believe?" exclaimed the man.

"Yes," replied Ralph.

"Mr. Ralph Milton?"

"That is my name."

Ralph's knees knocked together, and he trembled like an aspen.

"Oh! a debt," said Sybil, "give him a couple of pounds to square it."

"It is not a debt ma'am," said the man.

"Not a debt—what then?" demanded Sybil, who in her turn became pale.

"A much more serious matter."

"For Heaven's sake what is it?"

"I have a warrant for Mr. Milton's arrest."

"On what charge?"

"Come a little on one side ma'am, I don't wish to annoy you by getting up a scene."

He seized Ralph by the arm and led him to a comparatively quiet place.

Sybil followed.

"Now what is this charge" she asked.

"It is a charge of felony."

Sybil uttered a slight scream.

"By whom preferred?" she said.

"His employers, Messrs. Winter and Crisp ; he is accused of embezzling large sums of money, his defalcations have extended over a period of three months, and were accidentally discovered this afternoon, when he left the office."

"My pocket-book—" began Ralph.

"It is my duty to caution you against saying anything that may criminate you," exclaimed the detective.

"Is this true, Ralph," asked Sybil.

"You may speak sir to the lady," said the detective, "I'll turn my head on one side and hear nothing."

"Yes," replied Ralph in a hollow voice.

"It is? Good God! and I have been living with a thief," she cried, throwing up her hands in horror.

"It was for your sake, Sybil, you were perpetually asking me for money, and——"

"I thought you had it, if I had supposed for a moment that you were robbing your employers, I would not have stayed another moment under your roof."

"Have you no pity."

"I am sorry for you," she said coldly.

"Is that all," he asked in a heart-broken voice.

"What more can you expect."

"I have risked everything for you,"

"I did not ask you—you have only your own folly to thank for the position in which you are," rejoined Sybil.

"Oh ! good," exclaimed the unhappy young man, "welcome disgrace, imprisonment, penal servitude,—welcome all the consequences of my rashness, after this."

"If the thing gets about I shall be placed in a horrid position," continued Sybil selfishly, "fancy people saying I lived with a man who robs,—everyone will cut me."

"Officer" said Ralph in a tone dismally sepulchral, "sir," replied the detective.

"Take me away, I am ready."

"Is the lady coming, sir?"

"Oh ! dear no, I—I will see him in—in prison. He will write and let me know where he is, I suppose," returned Sybil.

The detective walked away arm-in-arm with his prisoner

Sybil slowly promenaded by herself.

"Oh !" she murmured, "this is dreadful, only fancy ! who would have dream't of such a thing."

She had not gone far before she almost ran up against Annie Harman.

They both spoke at once.

"Annie !"

"Sybil !"

CHAPTER XV

At Rose Young's.

"Where's Ralph?" was Annie's first question.

"I don't know," replied Sybil.

"Have you had a row?"

"Something like it."

"And has he cut you?" continued Annie.

"No, I have cut him; at all events circumstances over which he had no control have severed our connection. What brought you here?"

"I came to meet a man who has taken a fancy to me. He is very rich, though he has been badly off; he told me that when he was a young man he was a tutor in a school, but now he has any amount of money."

"Are you going anywhere with him?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"To Rose Young's, I think."

"I shall be there. I feel that I cannot go back to Merton to-night, and I have half a mind to drink more than is good for me."

"Come with us. If I tell Baxter that you are a friend of mine, he will be very civil to you."

"Is he a cad? I can't cotton to cads."

"Half-and-half. I can say much in his favour," replied Annie.

"Where are you to meet him?"

"At the great Sphinxes."

"Let us walk that way then."

"And get a drain on the way," suggested Annie.

A drain's no use to-night, I want a sewer," answered Sybil.

They had some brandy at a refreshment counter, and went on to the Sphinxes, near to which they saw a tall mild looking man neatly dressed, wearing more jewellery than he should have done, and having a precise appearance.

"Oh!" said Sybil, "he looks as if he had just been turned out of a bandbox."

"I told you he had been a schoolmaster," whispered Annie.

"What a time you have been," he exclaimed to Annie.

"Am I late?" she asked.

"Excessively so, it is half an hour after the time appointed."

"My watch is wrong."

"That is easily remedied," said Sybil.

"In what way, may I ask, young lady," replied Mr. Baxter.

"Buy her another."

He smiled.

"You have not introduced me to your friend," he exclaimed.

Annie performed the ceremony.

Turning to Sybil he said "I don't care a past participle about waiting, but I like people to keep appointments."

I don't care a past participle was his pet expression.

"If you belonged to me," said Sybil, "you would often have to wait, I am afraid, for I am very dilatory."

"But I do not belong to any one. I am my own master, and preserve my independence."

"If you do so long Annie is not so clever as she ought to be."

"I don't care a past participle for any woman's cleverness," he exclaimed.

"Don't you?" I wish you had some women to deal with—but I think a dry talk is as objectionable to a woman as a dry pipe is to a man, suppose we adjourn and—"

"Liquor," suggested Mr. Baxter.

"Precisely, you could not have guessed better."

Selecting a little round marble-topped table they sat down, and Mr. Baxter became the victim for champagne. He seemed to pay more attention to Sybil than he did to Annie, but the more attentive he was the more she snubbed him.

When the fireworks were over they returned to town and had some oysters, after which they went to a few places in the Haymarket, at each of which they had champagne.

Mr. Baxter was evidently rather new about town. He asked the names of places, and seemed desirous of gaining information.

The woman took him to the "Grapes," and he was told it was Barns's; they took him a little lower down the street to a place filled with pictures, and that was Barns's: they then went next door to the "Blue Posts," and that, too, was Barns's.

"Bless my soul," cried Mr. Baxter, "it's all Barns's; does the whole of the Haymarket belong to this prolific family?"

"Not exactly," replied Annie. "The old man of all has the 'Grapes'; Teddy's got the 'Posts,' and Miss Barns the crib next door."

"They seem to flourish like a green bay tree," remarked Mr. Baxter.

"Why shouldn't they?" said Annie, "I have always found them a good sort, and if you want to pass away an hour you can't do better than patronise one of the branches, if you don't the whole three."

It was now time to go to Rose Young's, and they walked in that direction.

When the wayfarer has descended the Haymarket as far as Jermyn Street, let him turn sharply round and walk a little way on the right hand side; he will see a door with a grating in it; let him knock if he has possession of the masonic signal which will admit him. The janitor will permit him to pass into the realms of bliss beyond the portal. If not, he must beat a speedy retreat into the realms of outer darkness.

Annie and Sybil were *habitués*, consequently they were admitted without any demur, and found themselves with Mr. Baxter in an ordinary-sized room, at one end of which was a counter well supplied with refreshments.

The room was filled with well-dressed men and women who were talking noisily.

A woman knocked off a man's hat, and it fell at Sybil's feet.

She gave it a kick of a correctional nature,

"Mind my hat," exclaimed a voice.

"Pick it up, then, out of my way," said Sybil.

"It is not such a very bad one," said the same voice, "since it has stood your assault and battery pretty well."

Sybil looked up, and saw a handsome man with a bushy beard and whiskers standing beside her.

"Who are you, old fellow?" she enquired.

He put on his hat, cocked very much on one side, and appeared to be slightly intoxicated.

"My name's Billy Valentine," he replied, "and I'm very tight."

"Come with me and you shall be a little more so. I mean to get tight to-night," Sybil said.

"I've been backing a horse."

"Indeed!" Sybil replied, as if much gratified with the information. "Did you pull off anything?"

"Everything: landed a pot."

"You've got some money, then."

"Pots, I tell you; do you want some?"

He put his hand in his pocket and drew out several sovereigns, and as Sybil would not take them, let them fall on the ground, when the women picked them up.

"What will you have," he asked,

"Champagne; I always stick to one thing."

"Give me some soda and seltzer," said the gentleman who had called himself Billy Valentine.

Mr. Baxter and Annie were also indulging in sparkling wine, in another part of the room. The quantity which Mr. Baxter had imbibed was beginning to take effect upon him.

Sybil heard his voice raised as if in angry contention with some one.

"Give me some more wine," he exclaimed, "I don't care a past—par—(hic) participle, for what you say, give's more wine I shay."

"Don't be an ass," said Annie.

"Ass," he repeated, "who'sh an ass I should like to know; wh—what talk non—(hic) nonsensh for?"

"You'll be turned out."

"Ha! (hic) ha!" cried Mr. Baxter valiantly. "whosh going to do it?"

"Why the waiter."

"Let the waitersh come, let forty waitersh come, I don't care a past participle for them."

Annie endeavoured to lead him away, but Mr. Baxter had arrived at a quarrelsome pitch of intoxication.

"Who'll fight for a sovereignsh," he exclaimed, "I'm (hic) rich, I've got a mine of wealth."

"Who's talking about monish," asked a man of decided jewish appearance.

"I, thou son of Israel," replied Baxter.

"You haven't got all the monish," said the jew.

"Go away; go to the flesh pots of Egypt," said Mr. Baxter, "I don't care a past participle for you."

"Vat vill you fight for?" asked the jew.

"Go away!" cried Mr. Baxter, "I'll punsh yer head; don't care a past—par—participle for you, not a past—par—par ——"

He made a final effort to speak, but failing to do so, fell against a lady, who exclaimed as she gave him a push, "no child of mine."

A stalwart waiter now interfered, and seizing Mr. Baxter by the collar ignominiously expelled him, whereupon Annie put him in a cab, and kindly took him home with her.

Was she not a good samaritan?

After that evening Sybil met Mr. Valentine very often; he was a man about thirty, of gentlemanly appearance and manners. He

had spent one fortune and was in a fair way to spend a second.

Sybil knew that she had impressed him favourably, and having taken a liking for him, did all she could to increase his growing fondness for her.

He drove her out in his phaeton, and took her to various places of amusement; they went to a *bal d'opera* at Her Majesty's, and it was there that Mr. Valentine made her an offer.

Tenderly pressing her arm, he exclaimed, "I have been thinking Sibby, that you and I might pull very well together.

"In what way," she queried.

"The matrimonial domestic."

"Oh! I'm tired of being kept by men," cried Sybil.

"Why?"

"A house is such a nuisance, and servants are always worries."

"Do you like lodgings better?"

"Ever so much."

"Very well; then let's get swell lodgings somewhere, if that's the only objection you have."

"Perhaps it is not," said Sybil with a saucy smile.

"Am I not the sort of fellow to be an amiable benedict?"

"I didn't say so."

"Well give me an answer, say one thing or the other."

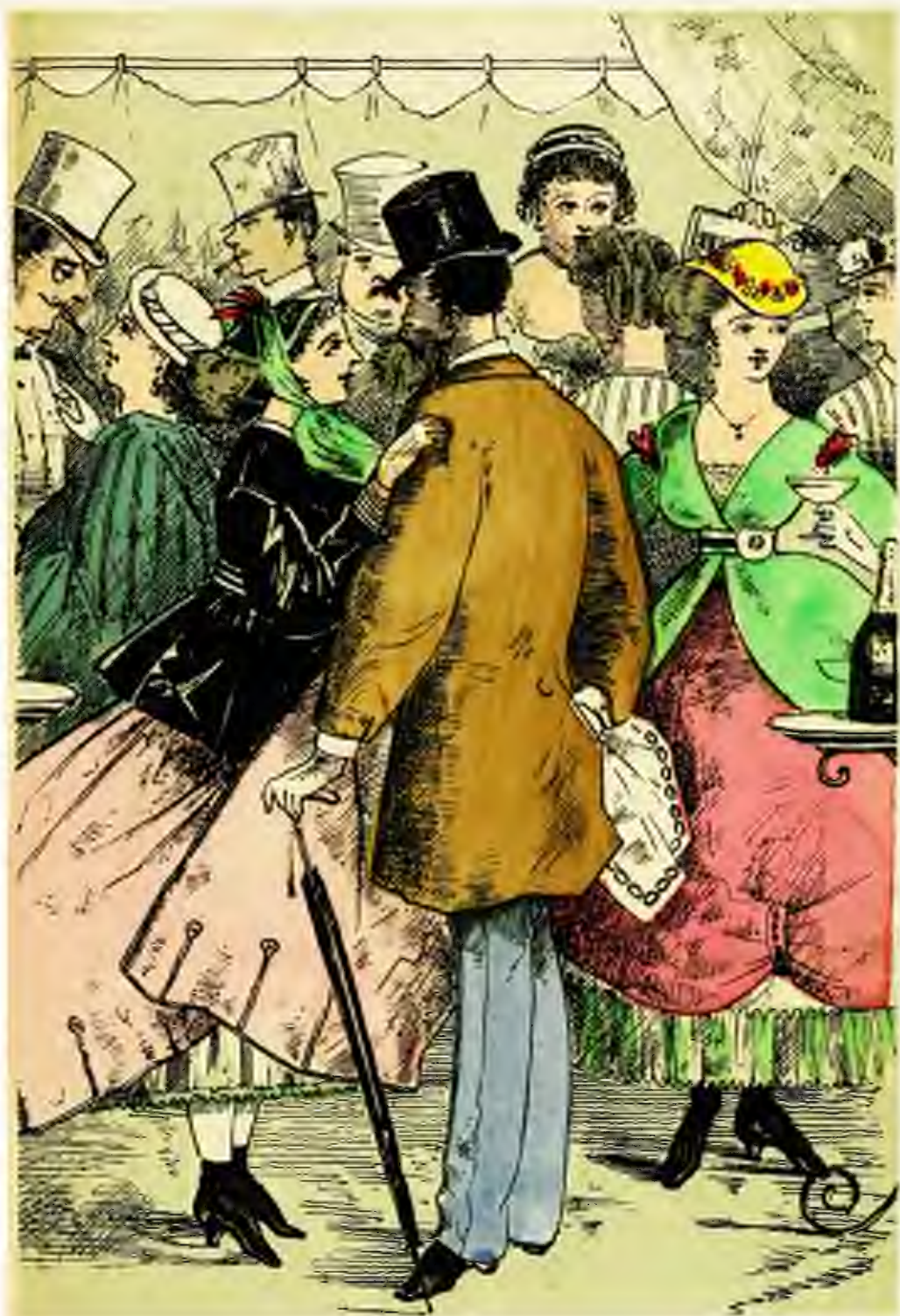
"I'll think about it," replied Sybil.

"No; I want an answer now," persisted Mr. Valentine.

"Where do you think of going?"

"Brighton first, London afterwards."

"That has decided me to reply in the affirmative. I like Brighton, and shall not at all object to show up there with a presentable man."



ROSE YOUNG'S

"That's flattering if it is nothing else."

"But it is something else."

"What is that?"

"Sincere."

Mr. and Mrs. Valentine went to Brighton, and took lodgings on the parade facing the sea. Here she was introduced to a friend of Valentine's, a Mr. Alfred Drewitt, whose father was in business somewhere in the north. The particular business in which Mr. Drewitt *pere* was engaged happened to be the manufacture of articles in papier mache.

Drewitt became enamoured of Sybil. His friend said he became enamoured of every woman he saw.

However that may be he sat for hours looking at Sybil, or rather making eyes at her.

Now to describe him.

He was neither tall or short; fair, with good though childish features, large liquid blue eyes, always swimming in a mist, as if he were about to shed a cataract of tears at a moment's notice, a quiet listless manner, and no particular mind.

This was Drewitt.

Valentine liked him because he had borrowed money on several occasions from his father. Sybil tolerated him because she liked being admired, and with the instinct of a clever woman knew the advantage of having two strings to her bow.

Billy Valentine thought Drewitt perfectly harmless.

Sybil treated him more like her brother than anything else.

"I say you two!" cried Billy Valentine one morning.

"What's the matter?" asked Sybil.

"I'm going for a spin with the harriers "

"Don't break your precious neck."

"I'm insured in your favour if I do," he replied.

"Oh ! then I recall my prohibition."

"We will take a gentle walk," said Drewitt.

"All right, sir Joseph."

Drewitt's Christian name was Joseph.

It was a fine morning in winter. A thin covering of snow made the landscape look very bleak and dreary. The sun shone out brightly, but without emitting much warmth.

Sybil and Drewitt walked along the parade ; the band was playing, but there were plenty of people out.

"Take my arm?" said Drewitt.

"Thank you, no. I can't keep my hands warm if I do."

"May I place my hand on your arm?"

"If it would give you any peculiar gratification do so by all means."

"It would," replied Drewitt, "I like you so very much that it is a privilege to touch you."

"Why don't you get married, Mr. Drewitt," said Sybil.

"Married !"

"Yes. Then you would have a dear little wife of your own to do what you liked with."

"So I should."

"Did that never occur to you?"

"Oh, yes ; but there are difficulties in the way."

"Of what?" asked Sybil.

"Of marrying," returned Drewitt.

"What are those difficulties?"

"In my case they are numerous."

"Let me hear one, please."

"In the first place, I cannot find anyone I like well enough."

"You have forgotten *me*," Sybil said with a roguish laugh.

"You!"

"Yes. How you stare."

"But you are another man's wife."

"Who told you so?"

"Am I mistaken," exclaimed Drewitt.

Sybil bit her lips.

"I would not have told you, only I thought Billy would have been sure to let you know that I was only a woman he was keeping."

"God bless me!" exclaimed Drewitt, "I have often said to myself, if Sybil were a widow to-morrow I would marry her directly."

"Do you mean that?"

"I was never more serious in my life."

"You would marry me, knowing what I am, if Valentine and I broke off."

"Yes; and consider myself very fortunate in having met with so pretty and amiable a woman."

"Can I believe you?" queried Sybil, still in doubt.

"I am not in the habit of romancing, so you may believe me without any hesitation," Drewitt rejoined with sincerity.

"Well," continued Sybil, "you know how matters are now. Should circumstances change, however, and—but we will not speculate on the future. Should I claim the fulfilment of your promise you will not back out of it."

"As God is my witness I—"

"That will do."

"I should consider myself the happiest man in creation if I could only call you mine," said Drewitt.

"With all my faults and imperfections."

"Yes; I would take you just as you are."

"That is generous."

"Whatever you may have done would be blotted instantly from my mind."

"When?"

"As soon as you left the church bearing my family name."

"Have you so much confidence in what I should be," asked Sybil in an affectionate tone.

"I have indeed; I believe you would endeavour to show me that you appreciated the—the—"

"Go on," said Sybil, a little stiffly, "I know what you were going to say."

"What?"

"The honour you had done me."

"Not exactly that. I have an excellent income, and shall succeed to a large business. I meant to say that I should have raised you to a certain position."

"We will not cavil about terms. Wait," was Sybil's oracular response.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Will you Marry Me.?”

“Billy, old boy,” said Sybil, as they were driving along the road to Hove.

“Well,” he ejaculated.

They were both wrapped in furs; the horses had bells round their necks in the Canadian fashion, and a spirited pair of bloods they were. Valentine had a cigar in his mouth, and was driving at a good ten miles an hour.

“Do you ever think of the future?”

“How do you mean?”

“What I say.”

“I think we must all go to the mob country some day, and the faster we go the pace the sooner we shall be shoved under.

“I don’t mean that,” said Sybil.

“What then?” asked Billy Valentine.

“Why, about getting settled.”

“Oh!” said Billy, drawing a long breath.

“Do you?”

“Well, as a matter of fact, I do. I don’t want to hurt your feelings, old lady, but as you have broached the subject, I must admit I do. There is a bit of a girl down at Sevenoaks who will some day be Mrs. Billy Valentine, or I’m much mistaken.”

“Don’t chaff,” exclaimed Sybil, quite angrily.

"I'm not chaffing ; I take my oath I'm not."

" You have not done with me yet, and I have the reputation of being a sticker."

" You would not try that game on with me."

" Wouldn't I ?"

" No. You know I'm an old stager, and not to be bounced into anything," replied Billy.

" Wait till the time comes," said Sybil, defiantly.

The conversation was becoming acrimonious.

" Will you marry me, Billy ?" queried Sybil, looking at him.

" It is hardly reasonable to ask me after the announcement I made just now," he answered, whipping up the off side horse.

" I have a particular reason for doing so."

" What reason ?"

" Never mind ; will you ?"

" What ?"

" Marry me."

" You want a decisive answer ?" he said.

" Yes, I do," replied Sybil.

" Very well, you shall have it."

" No, for a ' thou.,"' cried Sybil.

" By Jove, you're right. No Sibby, I cannot do it ; anything you want in the way of money or diamonds you can have."

" I want something more than that."

" Position ?"

Sybil nodded her head.

" Get it, then, don't let me stand in your way. You have my perfect permission," said Valentine, with a hardly perceptible tinge of sarcasm in his tone

"You mean that?"

"I do."

"Don't be surprised, then, if I leave you to-morrow."

"Leave me," repeated Valentine, as if he was not quite prepared for so sudden a step.

"I shall leave you to get married," Sybil said.

"To whom?"

"That is my secret."

"Keep it, then," he returned, savagely. "I think it is deuced hard that a man can't be jolly with a woman without being eternally badgered into marrying her."

"Don't alarm yourself," said Sybil, with a light laugh, "I don't want to badger you or any other man, only I thought it fair to give you the refusal of me."

"Thanks for your generosity. When is the matrimonial event to take place?"

"The day won't be far off. You had better give the bride away."

They drove back to Brighton in silence.

After dinner Drewitt dropped in to smoke a cigar. Valentine fell asleep in the arm chair.

Sybil beckoned Drewitt to her.

"Here! I want you," she said.

"Me?"

"One moment."

He came.

"Have you changed your mind yet?" she asked.

"Why do you want to know?"

"Because I don't wish to humiliate myself unnecessarily."

"I can candidly reply that I have not."

"*Eh ! bien !* In that case I am yours."

"Thanks, thanks, a thousand thanks," he cried rapturously.

"Hush ! not a word," she exclaimed, pointing to Valentine.

"When shall the ceremony take place?"

"As soon as you like."

"To-morrow," he suggested eagerly.

"Not quite so soon ; this day week."

"This day week be it, then," he rejoined.

"Eh !" cried Billy, waking up, "what's that ?"

"Drewitt's been telling me of some fun he had with a girl at Melton's," replied Sybil.

"What ! the austere St. Joseph?"

"Yes."

"I must cut him. He will corrupt my morals."

"That would be a pity," retorted Drewitt, laughing.

"Very great. It would spoil my chance of canonization."

"Try a weed," said Drewitt.

"If they are good."

"The fact of their being in Mr. Drewitt's possession ought to be a sufficient guarantee of their excellence," put in Sybil.

"Oh !" whistled Valentine, "that's how the wind blows."

He began to smell a rat.

Whether the odour of the aforesaid vermin was agreeable or not could not be discovered from the expression of his face, as he did not move a muscle.

• • • • •

"Man proposes but God disposes." This saying was wonderfully exemplified by an event which took place soon after Sybil's conversation with Drewitt.

He went to his home in the north, and in a week Valentine received a note to say that he had been seized with an attack of cholera, which had carried him off in less than four and twenty hours.

Sybil shrugged her shoulders when she heard this news. There were as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.

She was not long before she made the acquaintance of another of Valentine's friends, by name Frederick Sangster.

He fell as desperately in love with her as poor Drewitt had done, and was encouraged in the same way.

In short it was the same thing over again, and as Billy Valentine would not marry her she determined to have Fred Sangster.

She wanted to be married. It would be something new. Any novelty has charms for a woman.

And Sangster, the "familiar friend of Valentine, fell into the trap laid for him,

CHAPTER XVII.

An "Honest" Woman.

At length Sybil knew the full value and meaning of the phrase an "honest woman." She was married. Fred Sangster seemed devoted to his wife, and for a time all went "merry as a marriage bell." They had both to discover that there was a dark side to the honeymoon, and that the model of their domestic felicity had its tender reverse.

Billy Valentine was very wroth, but he felt that he had only himself to blame for losing Sybil and her love.

"Never mind!" he exclaimed, "there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, and I don't see why I should *fache* myself about a doll of a woman who never cared twopence for me."

In spite of his assumed levity the wound was a deep one, he felt it very severely. Sybil had contrived to wind herself into his affections, and he could not all at once cast her off.

Sybil heard rumours about Billy's recklessness. People said he was going to the dogs in a canter; he was never sober; he spent money in the most careless and prodigal manner. And who was to blame for this state of things? Why Sybil. People declared that if she had not treated him badly it would not have happened.

Fred Sangster humoured Sybil's every wish. If she wanted to

go to Cremorne or to the Crystal Palace, or a night-house, she was permitted to go and he accompanied her.

"Let us go to Cremorne to-night," she exclaimed, as they got up about three o'clock in the afternoon, not having retired to rest until broad daylight.

"All serene," replied Sangster.

"The brougham was ordered, and they went. The place was a flood of light. The music enlivened them. The gay and giddy throng moved round and round. The dancers darted here and there in a labyrinthine whirl.

"Oh! this is so jolly," said Sybil, "how I love this dear old Cremorne."

"Oh! Sibby!" cried a voice.

She looked up.

It was her old friend Annie Harman.

"Is it you Annie?" said Sybil shaking her affectionately by the hand.

"Unless I have been metamorphosed within the last half hour."

"Any one here?"

"Lots. There's Billy in the room, so awfully tight."

"I believe that's a common occurrence with him now," replied Sybil, carelessly.

"He's not a bad sort. You did not use him kindly."

"That will do. I don't want any of your interference in my affairs," cried Sybil with some asperity.

"All right! I hope you'll be better tempered the next time I see you."

And Annie walked away in high dudgeon.

"Come to the room," said Sybil.

Fred followed her passively.

The room was crowded, as usual. Champagne bottles and soda and brandy glasses covered the tables, upon one of which Billy Valentine was sitting. A bottle of Moselle in one hand, a glass in the other, his white hat cocked on one side.

In a loud voice he sang, as they entered :—

"Champagne Charlie is my name,
Moët and Chandon's is my game."

He caught sight of Sybil.

"Ah !" he exclaimed, "there's the only girl I ever loved, and she cut me."

"Oh ! the days when we were boys,
Happy little boys,
When we were b-o-y-s to-ge-ther,"

Sybil strode right up to him, regardless of the presence of her husband.

"I'm sorry to see this, Billy," she said.

"It's my look out," he replied, "and you're doing. Never mind, old girl, it'll be all the same a hundred years hence. Where's Sangster ?"

"In the room."

An expression of deep hatred stole over Valentine's countenance.

When he saw him he exclaimed in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the room—

"There's the man that married my woman. He called himself my friend, and he stole her affection. I hope she'll serve him as she served me. The cowardly reptile !"



"CREMORNE"

"Billy, hold your tongue," said Sybil.

Fred Sangster beat an immediate retreat.

"It's all right, old girl. You're on the safe side of the hedge; you've got your marriage lines to show, and you'd never have had 'em from me."

"Becaus' you couldn't afford it; you weren't well bred enough yourself to be able to marry a woman like me."

"Sangster's got plenty of the 'sangre azeel,' hasn't he?"

Sybil bit her lips.

"You're drunk, Billy," she said.

"Yes, and mean to be a great deal more so before I've done.

Drink ! drink ! drink !
In the merry bowl drown care.
For Champagne Charlie is my name,
And rare *veuve* cliquot is my game.

"Give me a kiss, Sibby."

"No."

"Do. For auld lang syne."

He put out his arm, and tried to clasp her in a firm embrace; but she gave him a push which precipitated him on his back, and she made her escape before he could recover himself.

She found Sangster leaning against the circular bar. He looked angry.

"Why do you speak to that drunken brute?" he exclaimed

"Because I like him," was the ready but annoying reply.

"Do you forget that you are my wife."

"Not at all; you too often remind me of the honour you have done me."

"You should be more circumspect."

"Don't be such a fool as to get jealous of poor Billy," said Sybil.

"I'm not jealous, but—

"But you see the man is drinking himself to death, and all because he loves me so dearly. Oh! if I had only known."

Fred Sangster groaned.

"This is one of the miseries of forming the sort of connection to which I have fallen a victim," he muttered.

"What's that you're saying?" enquired Sybil, who had only imperfectly heard his words.

"Nothing. Let us dance. Let us drink. Let us for God's sake do something. I can't stand this."

At that moment Billy Valentine's deep bass voice was heard in the room, exclaiming,

"Waiter! here! d—— your old soul, attend to me. A dozen of champagne, and more glasses, for

Champagne Charlie is my name,
And well kept Roderer's my game:

"Come along! come along," said Fred, dragging Sybil out of the circular bar.

"Poor Billy!" sighed Sybil.

"D—— Billy," growled Fred through his clenched teeth.

The night was far gone when they reached their home.

Fred saw a letter lying on the table; it was addressed to him, and the hand-writing was only too familiar to him.

"From my father," he exclaimed, and proceeded to open it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

— —

A Letter from Home.

Sybil watched his changing countenance as he began to read the letter, and wondered what the contents could be to move him so much.

"What does your illustrious paternity say for himself?" she asked.

"Tells me in polite language that I am going to the place below as fast as an express train and two engines can carry me," replied Fred.

"Anything else?"

"Oh! yes, a great deal. The fact is they have heard about my marriage, and the consternation is general."

"Why should it be? I am good enough for better men than you to marry me. It's no use being cut up; the thing's done, and they must have heard about it sooner or later"

"That's true. My allowance though is to be stopped at once, and I am generously offered Canada or starvation."

He spoke bitterly, and she could see that his hilarity was forced.

"Of course you will prefer the former?"

"No. I shall stop here and fight it out."

"Not with me," said Sybil decisively. "If I cannot have the

luxuries and the sort of thing generally to which I have been accustomed from you, I must find some one else."

He stared at her in mute amazement.

"You cannot be in earnest?" he exclaimed.

"I was never more so in my life, my dear fellow."

"Have you no love for me? What is the value of all your protestations?"

"That's just what I want to know," she answered, banteringly.

"Oh! Sybil, Sybil, how grievously have I been deceived in you."

Sinking back in a chair he buried his face in his hands, and the hot scalding tears trickled through his fingers.

In the awful agony of that moment, when he found that he was nothing to Sybil unless he had money, and that she cared less for him than she did for her terrier dog, he looked down into his desolate heart.

And what did he find there?

A shattered idol, a desecrated shrine.

Strong man as he was he shuddered as he recognized the terrible mistake that he had made.

"I might have known!" he muttered, "that such marriages never turn out happily. I might have foreseen that they could be productive of nothing but the most abject misery and disappointment. Oh! God, it is like a living body being tied to a corpse."

Sybil's face flushed as she heard these words. Then the angry blood retreated, and she became pale—pale as death.

Walking up to where he was sitting she placed one tiny hand as yet not denuded of its glove, upon his shoulder.

"What is that you say?" she asked, in a voice that would tremble in spite of all her efforts to keep it calm.

"A corpse tied to a living body," he repeated, mechanically.

"Am I the corpse?"

She shook as with an ague.

He made no reply.

She repeated her question, and with the same result.

"If you do not answer me this time I shall construe your silence with an affirmative," she exclaimed.

The result was the same again.

"Very well."

That was all she said.

Going to the table Sybil put on her bonnet and shawl, arranged her attire before the glass, and pulling aside the heavy morcen curtains, saw daylight breaking in the east.

The rustle of her heavy *moirè* dress roused her husband.

"Where are you going?" he queried.

"Out!" was the laconic reply.

"At this time of night?"

The living body shall be relieved of the presence of the corpse, and for ever.

She shuddered anew at the ghastly companion.

"But Sybil! what is the meaning of this sudden frenzy; you have no where to go at this time of the night. I spoke foolishly. I did not mean—"

"Never mind what you meant; you have nothing to do with that. I only care for what you said. The words were so plain and spoken so feelingly that they carried their meaning with them, if

not conviction. As for having no where to go to, that is ridiculous. I shall find some night-house open, and go home with some woman until I can settle my plans, and—but you shall hear from my lawyer about a separate maintenance, and all that. I dare say your governor will do the thing that is proper, if not we must put the screw on and make him. As for you, why, you may go to Canada or anywhere else for what I care.”

“Sybil,” he said pleadingly.

“Well, what now?”

Her voice was cold and stony, her manner frigid and repelling.

“Think for one moment, will you?”

“About what?”

“Think how I have loved you, how I love you *now*. Think how I have sacrificed everything for you—money, name, position. Think that I have striven and will still strive to make you a lady.”

“That you will never do,” she returned, with a hard dry laugh. I haven’t the makings of a lady in me. So that will be labour in vain. You had better abandon that idea.”

“You may drive me to something desperate.”

“You have driven me to something desperate already.”

“Stay, stay, I beseech you.”

“Not for worlds.”

Her hand was on the handle of the door. The next moment she was in the passage. After that the street door slammed with a sullen bang, and Fred Sangster was alone.

The worry of that instant!

“Gone! gone! he murmured; what am I to do?”

His head fell on his hands again; more tears as hot and scalding as the first trickled through his fingers.

The minutes ran on—the clock struck six. His mood changed. Springing up, he paced the room impatiently.

“I am a poor, weak fool,” he cried, “if I had any strength of mind I should—but no; I will not follow. Let her ‘gang her gait,’ as the Scotch say. Perhaps I am well rid of her. Who knows. But will she not come; is not this bravado on her part?” Ten to one on it. Ah, me! poor fool! poor fool!”

CHAPTER XIX.

The Prediction.

The whole of the next day elapsed, and Fred Sangster saw nothing of Sybil. He went about to different places he thought she would haunt, but could gather no tidings of her.

When the night fell, he was weary and tired out. Throwing himself on the sofa he snatched a few hours of uneasy slumber.

At twelve o'clock he woke up with a start, fancying Sybil was tanding over him. He had been dreaming about her.

Looking in the glass he was horrified to see how wild and haggard he was.

"I'll go and look for her," he said, "if I can find and persuade her to come I'll willingly forgive her all."

He saw a passing cab, hailed it and got in.

"Where to, sir?" said the man.

"Cremorne."

It was late when he got there, and the gardens were rapidly emptying.

The room however at the circular bar had their complement.

In the room he found Sybil who was the centre of an admiring throng.

She was always popular with men, though her own sex did not hold her in much esteem.

Her lynx-like eye saw him instantly.

"Come here old fellow," she cried, beckoning to him, and taking the initiative.

He came, thinking she wanted to make advances towards a reconciliation, but he was mistaken.

"I am glad you have come," she said.

"Why!"

"Some people were saying that you had cut me. I only wanted to put them right, and let them know it was all the other way."

"Will you come home," was the only reply he could trust himself to make."

"Certainly not with you. I haven't forgotten your elegant comparison. I wonder you come after the sepulchral party."

"Don't be a fool Sibby," he said.

"I have been a fool once. I shan't be likely to make a fool of myself again though."

"Where did the stultifying process begin," he asked trying to be jocular.

"When I married you old boy."

"I don't see that their was anything foolish in that," he answered.

"Then I do. I wonder who I am going home with to night; Annie have you got a bed to spare. I am divorced, or going to be, I want a refuge for the destitute."

"You can come if you like, only I am off at once," answered Annie.

"Good night you swells, I wish I was a widow for your sakes, we might tie another matrimonial knot, a little more Gordian than the present one."

The men returned her salutation, and taking Annie's arm Sybil walked out into the gardens.

The lights were already half down, and the place began to look desolate and forlorn.

The music was all over, and a coming silence and desolation hovered over the once festive scene.

Fred Sangster followed them at a distance.

As they were going along to the gate they met an aged man, to whom Annie Harman spoke.

"Who's that?" asked Sybil.

"The hermit."

"What hermit?"

"The fortune-telling man. Don't you know him? I thought every one knew him. I often stand him a glass of something to enable him to get up his inspirations, as I tell him."

"Annie!" said Sybil earnestly.

"Well!"

"Do stop him. I'd give anything to have my fortune told."

"All right. Here! you hermit swell! here? Mons. fortune-teller."

The old man turned round, and retracing his steps neared the ladies.

"What is your pleasure?" he asked in a mild tone of voice.

He was a man apparently upwards of sixty, grave, venerable, having long silky white hair, and a beard of the same spotless colour.

Fred Sangster got behind a bush; he was anxious to hear what was to be predicted.

They were utterly unconscious of his presence, fancying that he had remained in the room.

"My friend—" said Annie Harman, "wants to have a peep into the future, will you oblige her?"

"I cannot to-night, it is late," replied the hermit."

Sybil slipped a sovereign into his hand.

"Will that induce you?" she whispered.

The old man's eyes glistened with gratified avarice as his hands closed over the coin.

"Since you press me I will do all I can to satisfy your curiosity; show me your right hand, if you please."

Sybil extended her right hand.

The hermit examined the lines with great care, by the aid of a crescent moon and the light of a flickering lamp.

"Ah! ah!" he muttered, "Bad! bad! these lines are all cut short, not one of them goes straight on to the end. You will not live, your days are already numbered. God have mercy on your soul."

These solemn words startled Sybil, but laughing in a forced manner she said, "You are an infamous imposter, and ought to be prosecuted.

"Hush!" cried Annie, "he has not finished."

The old man had turned his eyes towards the star-spangled sky, and while intently regarding them said, "Let me try another agency, I may be deceived. My skill is not always infallible, and I would not prophecy that which may not be.

He was silent for a time, and at length, when his prolonged silence was becoming irksome he said, "I can say no more. It is your fate to die young."

"My end!" said Sybil in a terrified whisper, "will it be one of peace?"

"Alas! no. Instead of being bright and luminous your constellation is dark andowering. Your end, child, will be a violent one."

While the two recipients of his prediction was cowering beneath its calamitous weight, the hermit glided away like a snake in the darkness, and they saw him no more.

"Oh! Annie," exclaimed Sybil, "what a dreadful old man. He has quite frightened me. I am shaking like a leaf."

"He has been amusing himself at our expense," replied Annie.

"Would that I could think so!"

"Come away! I fancy shadows are—our spirits," said Annie, with an impressible tremor.

At this juncture Fred Sangster stepped out from his place of concealment.

Sybil and her companion were hurrying to the gate.

"Stop!" he cried.

They turned round.

"It's Sangster," said Annie.

"One word, Sybil!" he exclaimed when he came up with them. I have heard the old man's prediction. Let me be your guardian. If, as he says, trouble awaits you, at least allow me to share it with you and show my devotion to you."

"No! no! no!" she answered hurriedly, "you must go your way and I will go mine. If I am to die young so much the better. I shall die regretted."

"You refuse to listen to me.

"I do."

"This is my last effort. Reflect!"

"I never think, but my impulse tells me to have nothing more to do with you."

He reeled against the trunk of a tree, and the last words she heard him utter were—

"God bless you, Sybil!"

CHAPTER XX.

Father and Son.

The next day Fred Sangster's father sought an interview with him.

The young man had passed another wretched and sleepless night. If he had appeared haggard the day before, what was he now? But the semblance of his former self.

It was pitiable to behold him.

This woman was destined to fall like a blight upon all with whom she came in contact; first Valentine, now Sangster. Who would be the next victim?—herself, if the astrologer was to be believed.

Fred was not at all surprised to see his father, he had expected him; his only wonder was that he had not come before.

Mr. Sangster was very much grieved at the mesalliance his son had contracted. It had annihilated all his schemes for his advancement in life, nipped in the bud all his aspirations, and fallen like a biting frost upon his early life.

"My boy! my boy!" exclaimed the old man, as he was ushered into the room by the servant.

Fred turned his swollen and blood-shot eyes towards his father, and pushed back the heavy masses of unkempt hair from his massive forehead.

"Have you come to reproach me?" he asked.

"I certainly started from home with that intention."

"Spare me! for pity's sake spare me!"

"Where is—your—your wife?" demanded the old man.

"She has left me."

"Already?"

"I regret to say so," replied the young man.

"Regret! can you say that in your sober senses. Ought you not to be glad to see clearly at last. Does not the fact of her desertion of you show her worthlessness. Regret! rather rejoice, my boy."

"Oh, but you do not know how beautiful she is."

"A whitened sepulchre, that is all."

"How madly I love her," ejaculated Fred.

"This is infatuation. The woman has left you—forget her. We will at once communicate with some detective officer and have her watched with a view to a divorce. These women cannot keep themselves in the straight path, they must go wrong sooner or later. We shall soon free you from your millstone, Fred. Things are not so bad as I thought they were."

Fred shook his head dismally.

"And now—" added his father, "let us go and get some lunch. Oysters and chablis will not do us any harm, eh? boy. You used to be fond of oysters and chablis."

"No, thank you. I cannot eat anything," answered Fred.

"Nonsense, how are you to exist if you don't keep up your stamina. You will soon get over this little affair."

"Perhaps you had better go," said Fred. "I will try and snatch an hour's sleep on the sofa during your absence."

"Well, well, you must have your own way I suppose, but I

would rather you did as I told you. I shall be back in an hour or so, and in the evening I think you had better accompany me into the country."

"Very well," said Fred in a lethargic manner, as if it mattered very little to him where he went.

"I don't like the look of the lad," muttered Mr. Sangster, as he walked slowly through Pimlico. "He is far from well. I'll drop in upon my old friend Dr. Pilule and consult him."

He did as he proposed, and found the doctor at home, having just finished his consultations.

"I have called, doctor, to consult you about my boy," he exclaimed, as he was ushered into the doctor's *sanctum*.

"What's the matter with him?"

"He has married a woman, who has left him, and—"

"Ah! I see. The old story, in love and disappointed. Better find the woman."

"No, that won't do, we're glad she's gone.

"Then try change of air and scene."

"Will you come and see him."

"Bring him here."

"I'd rather you'd come, you see it's a delicate matter, and I don't think he'd come to you," said Mr. Sangster.

"My carriage is at the door. Where does the young fellow live? we'll make him the first visit, but I must not be long, old Lady Clewer will never forgive me if I'm later than one."

"Is she ill?"

"No, but her lapdog is," returned the doctor, laughing.

"Do you mean to say that a fashionable doctor like yourself

condescends to attend upon a lady's lapdog," asked Mr. Sangster in astonishment.

"Why not?" I go every day. Lady Clewer is rich, and she gives me a standing fee of ten guineas a week. It all adds to one's income my dear sir," answered Dr. Pilule.

"You surprise me. But here we are. Stop! pull the check-string. That is it, No. 25."

The servant rang the bell, and when the door was opened the doctor and his friend jumped out of the carriage.

"Mr. Frederick's gone out, sir," said the servant.

"Gone out! where?" asked the astonished father.

"Not long, sir."

"Did he leave any message."

"He only said he did not know when he should be back."

"Dear me, there is a mad message. He told me he would take a nap, and now he's gone out, and says he doesn't know when he shall be back."

"I must be off—another time—fee! oh, one guinea to you. Thank you."

Uttering these disjointed sentences and pocketing a guinea for doing nothing, Dr. Pilule got into his carriage, leaving Mr. Sangster standing on the steps and grumbling audibly.

"The boy must have taken leave of his senses," he exclaimed, "I'll go in and wait for him. No I can't. I'll give information to the police and have him arrested for—for—well, I don't know what for, but I'll—I'll have him cried about the streets of London by the town crier, I will."

After hesitating for some time he entered the house, sat down and indulged in a glass of sherry and a biscuit.

The day passed and no tidings were heard of Fred Sangster.

The alarmed father then went to the nearest police station and demanded an interview with the inspector.

He was shewn into the office, and the inspector asked him his business.

"I want you to find my son," replied Mr. Sangster.

"Where are we to look for him, and what has he done?" asked the inspector.

"If I knew the former I should not come to you, and as to the latter, he's married a bad woman, who's turned his head."

The inspector could not repress a smile.

"Well sir?" he said.

Mr. Sangster then related how he had gone away that morning, and how he feared that he might be tempted to the commission of some rash action.

A description of Fred was then supplied, and his father went away satisfied that he had done all he could, and feeling comforted by the assurance that the inspector would send to him the very moment he received any intelligence respecting the missing man.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Missing Man. Sybil's Discovery.

Sybil's friend Annie Harman, was what she called 'well up' in the world. She had a small house of her own in Park Village, very nicely furnished for her by an officer in the army, who seldom troubled her with domiciliary visits, and she had the use of a villa at Ryde. This latter residence was taken for her by her admirer, because his regiment happened to be quartered at Southampton.

She occasionally favoured him with a visit, and had asked Sybil to accompany her to her rustic villa, but as it was the height of the season Sybil refused, and persuaded her to wait until the drawing-rooms were over; the 'house' rose and London began to empty.

The two friends were walking through Covent Garden two days after Fred Sangster's mysterious disappearance.

"Shall we walk to Oxford-street and then get a cab home," said Sybil,

"If you like dear," replied Annie.

"I feel just in the humour for a stroll."

"Come along then; shall we tell our florist to send some more flowers for our place?"

"Some azaleas."

Annie paused in the middle of the central avenue, and gave

the order. They then walked on through Russell into Bow-street.

When they came opposite the police station Sybil "said stop a minute."

"What for?"

"I am going to read the notices on the boards here, they seem to have an irresistible attraction for me, I don't know why it is so."

She looked up at the notices and saw one headed "Dead body found."

Where.....In the River Thames.

WhenTuesday, 21st of June.

SexMale

Apparent age.....23

Name, if knownFrederick Sangster.

DressBlack frock coat, blue scarf, light trousers, side spring boots—all new.

Marks on personNone.

Property foundPocket-book, containing notes and gold, sleeve links, diamond ring, gold pin, watch and chain.

Where lyingThe dead-house, Shadwell.

So ran the placard.

A sudden change came over Sybil's face, her features contracted as if under the influence of a sudden spasm.

Annie Harman grew alarmed.

"Good God!" she cried, "what's the matter with you?"

"Look," Sybil managed to gasp out.

"Is it possible ! Fred has drowned himself !"

"And for me," said Sybil.

She felt so faint that she was compelled to lean against the railings; a sympathising policeman, standing at the entrance to the station, came up.

"Are you unwell miss," he asked.

"She has this moment learnt the death of a friend," replied Annie.

"Drowned?"

Annie nodded her head.

"Will you step inside the station ladies?" enquired the policeman, "I can get you a glass of water there."

"No; call a cab," said Sybil feeling stronger.

This was done at once, Annie rewarded the policeman for his civility, and they were driven off.

During the journey to Park Villa, Sybil did not utter a word; she was too much overcome, at least, so thought Annie, but in this belief she was mistaken. Sybil was shocked but she did not feel so very deeply, because she had never loved Sangster. Had the suicide been Billy Valentine, she would have been deeply pained, for him she had always entertained an attachment of a serious kind.

When they were seated in the drawing-room, Annie opened a cheffonier and brought out a case containing three bottles; one of these she selected; it held gin, and this spirit Annie imagined to be a sovereign remedy and panacea for every ailment, from the blue devils down to the toothache.

"Have a glass of this, dear," she said.

Sybil pushed it away. "No," she said, "I don't care enough about the man to get tight about him. I am only annoyed to think he should have been such a consummate fool."

"I thought you were grieving."

"About *him*?"

"Yes."

"Then you were woefully mistaken, that's all, I can tell you," replied Sybil, who added, "no, my dear Annie, there never was any love on my part, but I should be worse than a brute if I did not feel cut up when I reflect that he died the death of a dog and will probably get nothing but the burial of a dog."

"They'll bring it in this way," said Annie—"Found in the Thames, but how he came there, there is no evidence to show."

"I hope they may. Well, it is no use fretting. Heigho! If men will be fools I don't see why women should weep over them. Which is the worst, Annie, an old fool or a young one?"

"There is not much to choose between them."

"Yes, there is; a young fool's the worst; he is more impulsive. You would not find an old man throw himself into the river because a woman has snubbed him. He would go and have a good dinner somewhere, and look out for another as pretty, if not prettier."

They had dinner. They had tea, and the great question where should they go was debated.

"What do you say to going to the opera?" suggested Annie.

"No; let us go to Shadwell," said Sybil.

"What for! Good gracious! what put that idea into your head?"

"I want to see Sangster once more."

"But you don't care for him."

"Do not seek to know my motives, for if you were to question me for a week I don't believe I should be able to give you one good or satisfactory reason. Will you come?"

"No. I—I cannot; it is too horrible."

"Then I shall go by myself."

"You will not be so foolish. Why, I should have a fit or something."

"I am made of sterner materials," said Sybil smiling.

Sybil being determined dressed herself and started for the Shadwell dead-house, in a lumbering four-wheel cab nick-named a "Growler."

After passing through many low, narrow and ill-ventilated streets, the cab stopped at the workhouse. Sybil made her intention known to the porter, who, after obtaining a formal permission from the master, told her she could accompany him to the dead-house.

The chamber of death was situated in the lower regions of the workhouse, and they had to traverse several galleries.

"We're rather full just now," said the porter.

"Indeed!"

"Yes. You see, miss, the rate of mortality has been rather high down this way lately, and we've had the cholery bad."

"Are you not afraid of contagion?" asked Sybil.

"Is it catching, do you mean? I say no. But I always carry

a little bottle of vinegar with me, and drop a little on my handkerchief; you can have some, if you like."

She availed herself of this permission, thinking it only prudent to take precautionary measures.

"That's it, miss," said the porter, replacing the bottle in his pocket.

Suddenly Sybil felt faint. The man noticed it in a moment "You must bear up, miss," he continued, "it's not a nice sight, and it is not often we have ladies here."

"I want to be sure that a dear friend is lying here. It is for the purpose of identifying the body that I come," she replied, thinking that some apology was necessary for her presence.

"Then of course you're bound to go through with it. Which is the body, miss, if I may be so bold as to ask."

"Frederick Sangster."

"Ah! the gentleman. What a deal of trouble I've had to be sure with an old person coming after that body. Says he's the father. May and may not be, but he would stop here all day if he could. Does nothing but cry out about his dear boy, and a wretched woman who beguiled him and lured him on to his ruin. Those are his words. It's quite affecting to hear him go on.

"His father? Fred's father?" said Sybil.

"Yes, and bless me if I don't think this is him coming. Have I been and gone and left the door leading to the dead-house unbolted. I thought I closed it behind us. Here's somebody coming though, as safe as houses."

Raising his lantern he allowed its light to fall in slanting rays along the passage.

Soon an elderly gentleman was perceived running quickly over the stone flags with which the passage was paved.

"You can't keep me out. None of you can keep me out. I won't be kept out," he exclaimed.

"You'd better apply for my place," suggested the porter, with a grin.

"I've a right to be with my boy until the grave closes over him. The undertaker's men are at the door, and the body shall be moved to another house directly," said Mr. Sangster.

"Have you the master's order, sir?"

"I have," replied the old gentleman, flourishing a piece of paper in his face.

"That'll do. You needn't go and put anybody's eyes out. It's all fair and square and above board, and that's what I want."

"Who's this?" abruptly demanded Mr. Sangster, looking at Sybil.

"A lady come to see—"

"See whom? speak! speak! or I'll throttle you!" exclaimed the father of the suicide excitedly, threatening the porter with uplifted fist.

"I say, sir, this won't do sir. I must have assistance and a straight waistcoat," cried the porter terrified.

"Speak?" shouted Mr. Sangster in a voice of thunder.

As for Sybil she was incapable of word or action. This *rencontre* was so totally unexpected and so disagreeable that she was paralysed.

"It is only a lady come to see the body for the purpose of identification."

"What body?" asked Mr. Sangster, stamping his foot on the floor and glaring at Sybil.

"Him as you calls your son."

"Ha! is it so?"

This to Sybil.

"The man has spoken truly," she replied, recovering herself by the exercise of a prodigious effort.

"Am I to understand that you are the syren who beguiled him to his fate?" he went on in a tone of concentrated fury.

"He was my husband," she replied quietly.

"Your husband? oh! oh!" he added, "it is such abandoned wretches as you who contaminate the youth of the country, sap their strength, mentally, physically, and drive them to destruction."

"My dear sir," said Sybil, "I can make every allowance for your feelings, but—"

"I am his father."

"I know it, but I was about to observe, if you have any claim to the designation of a gentleman you will be a little more moderate in your language."

"What is gentility to me. Can I think of anything but my bereavement. He was my only surviving son—the child of my age—my prize—my hope—my glory—and you! you!" he hissed. "have robbed me of him. May eternal curses fall upon you, may—"

"No! no! do not curse me," she pleaded, cowering beneath his torrent of fiery invectives.

"I *will* curse you. A father's curse will avail against such as you, harlot. Do you hear me? I curse you. May your days be

shortened, as were my boys—may your end be violent, as was his—may your life until your death be brief, but full of misery. Go! go! go! If that will not weigh you down into the dust, then was Cain branded in vain, and murder is not sin.”

“Oh! this is too dreadful,” sobbed Sybil.

She leant upon the porter's arm, her own strength seemed insufficient to support her body.

“Well!” said the porter, “I never did hear an old man go on like that 'ere, he ought—he ought to be pumped on. Lean on me miss, and if so be you want to see your husband, I'll have this 'ere lunatic removed, and—”

“Thank you, no. Take me away, that is all I ask. Take me away. Oh! please, *please* take me away.”

“You stop there, old fireworks, or I'll lock you up,” said the porter, “you've been and frightened this poor lady into fits a'most and ought to be ashamed of your wicked old self, only you ain't got any shame in you.”

Mr. Sangster did not attempt to follow them. He remained in the dark leaning against the wall, apparently satisfied with his denunciation.

When Sybil reached the door of the workhouse, she gave the porter a handsome gratuity, and was soon being driven in the direction of home, as she had retained the services of her cabman, not being sure whether such things as cabs were to be met with in the unknown regions in which she found herself.

“I'm thinking she won't forget the Shadwell Dead-house in a hurry,” muttered the porter as he watched the rapidly retreating

vehicle, adding, "I suppose I must go and see after my old lunatic or there'll be another rumpus."

The remains of the unfortunate young man were removed to Pimlico that night, and through the long weary watches of the night his father mourned over him.

CHAPTER XXII.

Bad Luck.

The scene in the corridor with Frederick's father made Sybil very ill. Some one has said that all women are more or less superstitious. Be that as it may, it is certain that she became timid and nervous, especially when she thought of the astrologer's prediction, and secondly when she recalled the terrible hate-laden curse with which Mr. Sangster had overwhelmed her.

Seeing that her friend was really unwell, Annie Harman suggested that they should make their long-promised but long delayed trip to the Isle of Wight.

To this Sybil made no objection, and they started. The villa at Ryde was quite ready for them, and the sea breezes did Sybil much good, strengthening her nervous system, and bringing back some of the vanished roses to her pallid cheeks.

She still retained Frederick's name, and was known as Mrs. Sangster.

The scenery of this beautiful island was much appreciated by both Annie and Sybil. They frequently visited Shanklin and the other chimes, indulging in pic-nics and similar pleasurable excursions.

"I shall soon be able to go back to town," said Sybil, after a long walk in the country.

"I am rejoiced to hear it ; it made me quite sad to see you so ill," replied Annie feelingly.

Sybil was quite right, it was not long before she returned to London. Annie was obliged to stay at Ryde ; so Sybil looked out for lodgings in her old neighbourhood—Pimlico, and endeavoured to change her name. But her luck had forsaken her ; whether her illness had changed her or not—and she was less pretty—it is difficult to say. One thing is certain, she was not nearly so popular ; and she had a difficulty in making both ends meet.

It is a remarkable feature in connection with the constitution of women, that she is capable of enduring, with patience and fortitude far beyond that of the stronger almost every degree of bodily suffering. It is true, that she is more accustomed to such suffering than man ; it is true, also, that a slight degree of indisposition makes less difference in her amusements and occupations than in his. Still there is a strength and a beauty in her character, when labouring under bodily affliction, of which the heroism of fiction affords but a feeble imitation. Wherever woman is the most flattered, courted, and indulged, she is the least amiable ; but in season of trial her highest excellences shine forth.

So it was with Sybil, she endeavoured to obtain a livelihood by plying her needle : she even learnt the way to work at a sewing machine, but the miserable pittance she obtained in return for her services was so scanty, that she could scarcely keep body and soul together.

She now became a regular frequenter of the market, and saw a different phrase of London by Night to that which she had been accustomed.

Night after night, she was to be seen at Barnes's, drinking with one and drinking with another, until her flushed face and loud laugh told that the wine was doing its work.

It was a singular, but true, that from the hour of Frederick Sangster's death, Sybil went gradually down, sinking lower and lower, until the end came.

She had no luck whatever.

A friend, engaged as a *danseuse* at the Alhambra, was taken ill ; she knowing that Sybil had once been engaged at Rural Lane, asked her to go as a substitute, and after some consideration, she was accepted by the ballet master.

This, initiated her into the 'canteen,' the veil of its eleusynian mysteries was raised. The sylphs—how like sylphs when dressed or rather encased in their own attire !—solaced themselves with a little refreshment in the canteen—and they wanted it, for a ballet girl's work is hard, and champagne is not a bad stimulant.

Had Sybil been anything but what she was, she would have been a little surprised and her modesty shocked, to see the sylphs sitting upon the knees of gentlemen, having the privilege of the *entré*, and drinking wine with the grace of fairies but rather more copiously.

She stood by herself, no one knew her ; no one 'gave her to drink'. The call-bell rang, and she followed the *troupe* on to the stage. At rehearsal in the morning she had got the piece by heart, and acquitted herself tolerably well ; at length she had to execute a *pas seul*, and while in the act of doing a difficult pirouette, her foot slipped under her, she fell heavily and sprained her ankle badly.

They carefully removed her and took her, be-muslined as she was, to the hospital, where she languished for three months, before she was able to get about.

The first use she made of her liberty, was to go to the Hay-market, not having been able to indulge to excess for some time, she determined to make up for lost time, and contrived at about twelve o'clock, to get very satisfactorily intoxicated.

An American came in and asked her if she would have anything to drink.

"No," she replied, "not with you."

"Get out of the way then, and let those who will," said the American, endeavouring to push her away from the bar.

"Certainly not," said Sybil, "I am here and mean to stay here; if an Englishman asked me to move, I might, but I certainly shan't for a Yankee."

"Wait till the Yankees whip you Britishers and take London."

"They haven't pluck enough to fight."

"Go long," said the Yankee angrily, "we've beat you so often we are tired of doing it again."

"I give that an emphatic denial," exclaimed a man standing by.

"Who are you talking to?" asked the Yankee taking his measure.

"You ! you nigger driving thief."

"I'm a northerner, a downright Yankee ; so that shot don't hit," replied the Yankee quietly.

"Then you're one of Benjamin F. Butler's beasts. Go to New Orleans and insult the women, or take another Trent."

"I'll have my liquor first," said the Yankee, "I'm dead on to putting myself outside suthin, and when that's done I'll make you acquainted with thunder and lightening—fact, stranger."

He now pushed Sybil rudely, and she being annoyed thereat, took up a bottle of soda water lying on the counter, and struck him violently over the head with it.

The bottle broke, leaving the neck in her hand

The American fell like an ox stricken with a pole axe.

Blood ran in copious streams over his face, neck and shoulders.

Everyone thought he was dead.

"You've killed him !" arose on all sides.

Sybil did not attempt to move.

"Serve him right if I had," she said, "the nasty insulting brute !"

The police were sent for and Sybil was taken into custody

The unfortunate American was sent in a cab to the nearest hospital, when restoratives were administered and his hurts attended to.

He was not so seriously injured as was at first supposed, though the doctors feared the intervention of erisypelus.

The next morning Sybil was brought up before the magistrate, and as the American appeared against her the case was gone into ; after the evidence had been given, she was asked what she had to say, she replied "nothing."

"Really," said the worthy magistrate, "I do not know whether I ought not, in a case of this desperate description, to commit to the sessions, but I shall mark my sense of the prisoner's conduct, by convicting her under the aggravated assault act, and sentencing

her to be imprisoned for three months, without the option of a fine."

This announcement took Sybil by surprise, she had expected to be fined; there was no appeal against the magistrate's decision however, and she was removed to the cells in a fainting condition, to be afterwards taken to the house of correction in the van.

Misfortunes never come singly but troop along in whole battalions, says the poet; and nine times out of ten we are bound to admit that the poet is in the right.

When Sybil was released from durance vile, she had no option but to return to her former mode of life; she was growing reckless now, and cared little for anything. Respectability was a phantom of the past, and she took up her residence in a small street, in Soho; in the same house lived a French woman, Madame Sylphido, she called herself.

Tall, stout, masculine and impudent, she was not prepossessing in voice, manner, or appearance. Sylphido belonged to the class of women, not numerous in London, but who you are always to meet with in Portland-place, Regent-street, and Waterloo-place. They ply their infamous avocation with unblushing effrontery, and are an undoubted nuisance, for they will accost and solicit those who pass them, and be disagreeably pertinacious in their appeals.

Sybil soon grew tired of Sylphido and her society, but could not get an opportunity of going away.

Sylphido did not by any means talk good English. Some words were not at all familiar to her, and then she would say, "ah! what's this?"

"I wish I could do something better than living here with you and going about at night," said Sybil one morning.

"You tired of me," observed Sylphido.

"Sick as a dog of it."

"Ah! what's this sick as a dog," asked Sylphido.

"It means I've had enough of it."

"Ver well, you going ven you like."

"If I could please myself I would go immediately, if not sooner."

"Ah! what's that if not sooner? Nevare mind, you have vun glass of claret. Just von glass."

Sybil shook her head.

"You vill not—no; you God dam English vill drink the gin."

That evening Sybil met an old friend who lived in Stamford-street, Blackfriars-road, and for the first time in her life she crossed the water to live.

While here a singular adventure befell her. It was winter. The snow lay thick upon the ground. She had been over Waterloo Bridge and was walking home through Stamford-street when she saw some boys snowballing an old man. She helped him to drive away his tormentors, and used her umbrella to advantage.

The old man was extremely venerable, but not at all decrepit. He walked with ease, though he depended upon the assistance of a stick. His attire though unattractive was scrupulously neat, and his face wore a disdainful smile, such as we sometimes see in Vandyke's paintings.

"My child," he said, laying his hand in a paternal manner on Sybil's shoulder, "I thank you."

"Oh, don't mention it," she replied.

"You have rendered me a service."

"Perhaps you will do as much for me some day," she said jocularly.

"I will do more. Do you mark me; I will do more at this present moment."

"You can give me a five pound note if you like.

"That is not my meaning, though you can have the money if you stand in need of it. You belong to that class, my child, which we denominate unfortunates. Nay, do not deny it. To me much is known, and what is hidden my penetration discovers. Moreover you are in distress."

"Well," said Sybil, "who was at a loss to understand the old man.

"I have a house in the City. You can come and live in it, enjoy every luxury, and—"

"What must I do in return?"

"Nothing repugnant to any woman of courage."

"What? What?" she demanded impatiently, her curiosity piqued.

"You shall come and see me, then I will tell you; here it is cold, and we cannot speak in the street," said the old man.

"Where do you live?" enquired Sybil.

"The third house in Eastanton-street, Whitechapel."

"Your name?"

"Is Dayle. Dyke Dayle. You will come?"

"If I say so, I will."

"Say so."



WATERLOO PLACE

She hesitated for a brief space.

"Yes. I will come.

"That's good!" said Dyke Dayle, "to-morrow at one I shall expect you. Adieu, sleep be with you."

So saying he toddled off, leaving Sybil overwhelmed with astonishment.

She did not mention her meeting to any one, and when she went out the next day made an excuse that she was going shopping.

The snow was still on the ground, and the wind blew keenly from the east as she entered Eastanton-street, a thoroughfare she found out with difficulty. It was in a retired situation, and composed of small shops and private dwelling-houses.

There was no knocker, so she rang the aged and rusty bell. The summons was almost immediately answered by Dyke Dayle in person.

"That is a good girl," he said patronizingly, "come in!"

She was ushered into an old fashioned apartment, filled with books and papers, upon many of which by means of disuse dust had collected.

"Tell me what you want," said Sybil, who was a little frightened, "and let me go."

"Sit down. We must not be in a hurry, that is at all times bad," responded Dyke Dayle, "my object in bringing you here was to suggest a way of making money for us both."

"Yes!" she ejaculated.

"You are poor, and I can see have occupied a better position."

Sybil involuntarily looked at the not overclean finery she was wearing, and thought of her dirty bonnet-strings.

The poor are not usually over scrupulous. I have travelled. Now in India I met with a plant possessing peculiar properties. It is called the datura plant, and belongs to the order of Solanaceæ, or nightshades, in which are included the deadly nightshade and henbane, as well as the wholesome potato and tomato. Tobacco and belladonna are likewise members of this apparently anomalous order, and the *Acoeanthera venenata* of the Cape, with the juice of which the Hottentots envenom their weapons, and poison the baits laid for wild beasts. The *Datura stramonium*, or thorn apple, is smoked as a palliative in spasmodic asthma, and used as a medicine in mania, epilepsy, convulsions, and tic-douloureux. The seeds, taken internally in small doses, bring on a kind of delirium."

"Do you follow me?"

Sybil replied in the affirmative.

"Very well," said Dyke Dayle, "so far I have been a little obscure, I will now be a little more explicit. You know what drugging means?"

"Perfectly well," said Sybil, upon whom a new light began to dawn.

"The datura is frequently used for the purposes of drugging. This is effected in a safe and simple manner by throwing a little of the datura powder into anything your victim is about to take; Now and then, it is true, the druggee dies; but this is an accident, and by no means desired by the practitioner, whose interest it is that his patient shall merely be reduced to a state of temporary insensibility. The effects of a liberal dose sometimes last for a couple of days."

"The effects of a small quantity work off in a few hours."

"What is all this to me?" enquired Sybil,

"You shall hear. In a few days I have reason to believe that a rich stranger will arrive from the East. The ship will come into the docks. If I had any trustworthy woman about me I would give her some of the datura powder to put in his glass. The effect of the dose would resemble intoxication; it would be easy then to—to ease the stranger of his superfluous cash, and—but you are a woman of the world, and I need say no more."

"You want me to be your accomplice in a robbery?"

"That is plain English," said Dyke Dayle, fidgetting a little uneasily in his chair.

Sybil regarded him steadfastly.

He did not press her for an immediate reply, seeing that she was occupied in deep thought.

Being a good judge of character he expected that he had chosen his tool well, and did not fear a contradictory reply.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Paddy's Goose."

Many thoughts flitted through Sybil's busy brain. She was sorely tempted to accept Dyke Dale's offer. Were she to do so, she could see that she would at once have the command of money, and those who have known what it is to want can appreciate the blessing of being once more in funds.

"I have listened attentively to you," she said, "and I have every inclination to entertain your proposal, but the risk!"

"Bah!" cried Dyke Dale, "that is nothing; if the affair is managed cleverly there will be no risk."

"What will be my share of the spoil?"

"That depends; we shall see about that."

"Will you give me some money at once?"

"Certainly. I have trusted you so far, why should I not trust you to the end."

"Very well, it is a bargain; I will do your bidding in this matter," said Sybil.

The eyes of the old man glistened with pleasure.

"After this adventure is satisfactorily accomplished," he exclaimed, "we will organize some more of the same nature. I have been on the look-out for a woman like you for some time past; it is a pleasure to have met with you; a lucky fate threw us together."

Sybil smiled, and said "Let us hope so."

It was arranged that Sybil should quit the locality in which she was residing, and take up her abode in the house of a 'worthy friend' of Dyke Dayle's, Mrs. McMurray by name. This woman was a big raw-boned Scotch woman, and kept a house of ill fame in the vicinity of Ratcliffe Highway. Sybil was treated with every consideration, for Mrs. McMurray evidently had the greatest respect for Mr. Dyke Dayle, and knew that to show any indignity to a friend of his would rouse his indignation.

There were other 'young ladies' in the house besides Sybil, who found them, sometimes merry and laughing, at others careworn and depressed, until a few glasses of gin had created a fictitious mirth.

These poor creatures were in the habit of going to the various song-rooms or dancing saloons in Ratcliffe Highway. Sybil accompanied them once or twice, and saw new phrases of life.

But the time arrived for the good ship "Malaga" to run up the Thames and land her passengers, among which was Simeon Bonar, the man of whom Dyke Dayle had spoken.

How Dayle had derived his information it was impossible for Sybil to divine.

But that he was right in every important particular it was equally impossible to deny.

Simeon Bonar was a rollicking roystering sort of a fellow, about forty years of age. He had amassed a fortune of twenty thousand pounds in the East, and had come home to spend it.

Dyke Dayle called upon Sybil at Mrs. McMurray's on the day of Bonar's arrival.

"Good morning, my dear," he said.

She replied to his salutation respectfully.

"The time for action has arrived."

"Has he come?"

"He has. Simeon Bonar—that is his name, will be at the tavern known as 'Paddy's Goose' to-night at nine, for the express purpose of meeting you, of whom he has heard an extravagant description."

"How can he have heard of me?" asked Sybil in surprise.

"Through my instrumentality."

"How shall I know him?"

"By this photograph, which is an exact likeness of the man."

He handed her what is called a *carte de visite*.

She gazed at it, and beheld a tall handsome man, bronzed by exposure to a tropical sun, weather beaten, bearing the traces of dissipation in every quarter of the globe on his expressive features.

"A good looking fellow," exclaimed Sybil.

"Ah! some years ago, you might with truth have said so," replied Dyke Dayle.

"You have known him then?"

"Have I girl?" cried Dayle almost fiercely, "seek not to question me about those days."

"Is he your enemy?" queried Sybil, surprised at his vehemence.

"I *hate* him, don't that suffice?"

"Tell me why you hate him," exclaimed Sybil, "I like to hear life histories; this man must have done you some great wrong."

Dyke Dayle walked up and down the apartment like a caged

tiger, for some moments ; all his old vindictiveness was aroused, and the play of his features was a study.

Suddenly he stopped before her.

"Listen !" he cried, "that man, came between me and the woman I loved, many, many years ago, now. He stole her from me, and I—I—God ! can I bear this examination of the buried past,—I was left to mourn and weep, amidst the desolation of a broken heart."

Sybil pitied the old man.

"That is why you hate him, perhaps you are justified," she said.

"There is no 'perhaps' about it. I am—I know I am ; yet, I would not kill him : let me deprive him of his hard earned gold, and send him back to toil for more, and I am revenged, amply—amply revenged. Serve me but well in this, child, and I will reward you so handsomely, that—that you need not fear starvation in your old age."

"I shall never live to be old," replied Sybil.

"That you cannot tell," observed Dyke Dayle, calming down a little.

"I have no wish to be old."

"Tut, tut ; but to business. You must be well-dressed, wear good jewellery, and fascinate this man. Here is the datura, use it carefully ; when the stupefaction is in its first stage, he will do all you ask him. He will carry his fortune with him in two pocket-books, they hold notes, get the books from him, bring them to me—to me, child, and I will see to the rest."

"Very well. I will do my best," replied Sybil.

Exactly at the hour appointed, she entered the tavern called Paddy's Goose, which was crowded with people. Though well dressed she had on nothing calculated to excite unusual attention ; a black silk dress and a velvet mantle to match, it was not glaring enough to attract the eyes of those vulgar beings, who admire colours and like to see a woman resemble a rainbow.

A man whom she instantly recognised as Simeon Bonar emerged from a corner near the door, where he had been standing, watching the people pass in and out.

"Pardon me," he said, "if I'm not mistaken you are the fair lady who was to meet me here to night."

"If you are Mr. Simeon Bonar—"

"That's my name, and yours—"

"Be content at present to regard me as the fair unknown," replied Sybil.

"So be it," rejoined Bonar, regarding her with admiration.

In spite of her illness, her misfortunes, and her bad luck, Sybil was yet beautiful ; and beyond everything paid for dressing. Good attire was not thrown away upon her, and on this evening in particular, she recalled her old and best days.

The room was crowded to excess, Simeon Bonar proposed that they should adjourn to a private apartment, when they could have a bottle of wine and chat more at their ease.

"My servant will wait on us," he said.

"I have no objection," answered Sybil.

Simeon Bonar beckoned to a man in the body of the room who speedily approached, he bowed respectfully to his master and stared almost rudely at Sybil.



RATCLIFFE HIGHWAY
"POOR'S GOOSE"

She in her turn, regarded him stedfastly.

Where had she seen him before? Surely that face was familiar to her. She wandered back through the dim vista of years, but could not recall his name.

“A private room,” said Mr. Bonar, “and wine.”

The servant went away to obey the order given him, returning presently with the announcement that all was ready.

The room was small but comfortable, a fire blazing in the grate and three gas jets imparted a cheerful appearance to everything.

Mat, as Mr. Bonar called his servant, opened a bottle of Moselle, filled two glasses and retired.

“Old mother, Mrs. Murray as we call her, did not exaggerate when she said you was beautiful my pet,” exclaimed Mr. Bonar.

“Do you admire me,” asked Sybil.

“Very much. We sailors are a susceptible and amorous class. We appreciate beauty in every clime, but I am fondest of the golden tresses, that our favoured clime produces.”

Emptying his glass and looking lovingly at Sybil, he began to sing in a fine, rich, clear voice :—

THE SAXON BLONDE.

They say that the dark-eyed maids of Spain
Are passionate and fond ;
But eyes of blue are tender and true,
So give me my Saxon blonde.

An arch coquette is the bright brunette,
Blithe and merry and gay ;
Her love may last till the summer is past,
But my blonde's for ever and aye.

If bards of old the truth have told,
The Sirens had raven hair ;
But on the earth, since Art had birth,
They paint the angels fair.

Ah, well ! maybe the truth to say,
A lover is over fond ;
And I can't deny, nor will I try,
My love is a golden blonde.

Sybil smiled and allowed him to smooth her hair, with the back of his hand.

" You are very pretty. If you would love me," he said " I think I should be content to live in this country, and renounce roaming for ever more."

" Why should I love you ?" asked Sybil.

" Why have women loved me all over the world? Because they know instinctively that I love them. Love begets love and I may have a few good looks into the bargain."

" The conceit of you ancient mariners," ejaculated Sybil.

" Ancient ! Not so very ancient either," he retorted a little annoyed.

" Forgive me. I must joke," exclaimed Sybil.

He placed his hand round her waist and drew her closer to him.

" Give me some more wine, please," Sybil exclaimed.

He filled the glasses, and finding the bottle empty, got up to ring the bell for some more.

This was Sybil's opportunity.

She drew the datura powder from her bosom, and emptied it into Simeon Bonar's glass.

A slight effervescence took place, and then the wine resumed its former appearance.

He was utterly unconscious of what she had done, and carelessly tossed of his wine.

“An odd taste,” he remarked.

“In what?” asked Sybil lavishing sweet smiles upon him.

“The wine.”

“Kiss me. The touch of my lips may banish it,” she said.

“Right! Right my little woman,” cried Simeon Bonar, “you never spoke more truly, I’ll take you at your word by God.”

He caught her in his arms, pressed her hands in his and imprinted half-a-dozen hot, passionate kisses upon her rosy lips.

There was a knock at the door.

“Come in d—— you come in,” cried Bonar

It was Mat.

“Did you ring sir?”

“Wine, you rascal, more wine.”

Mat retired.

Again the suspicion that she had seen that face somewhere before, haunted Sybil.

Where! where could it have been?

In vain she tortured herself with the question receiving no answer.

Suddenly Simeon Bonar put his hand to his forehead.

His features contracted as with a spasmodic affection of the heart.

“What’s the matter?” asked Sybil.

"My head."

"Aches. Perhaps the heat."

"'Tis nothing. 'Twill go away. One more kiss my angel. One more taste of those glorious lips."

He kissed her. She suffered him to do so unresistingly.

She smiled. Oh! what a horrible danger lurked in her smile.

Dalila could not have been more false when she was beguiling the giant, stealing his secret, and luring him on to his ruin. Out upon the Philistine woman!

"Oh! my darling," said Simeon Bonar, "if you would only consent to love me, and make my heaven—ah! that pain—my heaven here upon earth."

Again his features contracted, and he complained of a sharp shooting pain darting like a two-edged sword through his throbbing brow.

"I have money, he went on, in my pockets, here and here. I have £20,000. We will spend it in creating joy. Will we not?"

"Yes!" replied Sybil.

Simeon Bonar now began to exhibit all the symptoms of intoxication.

His head fell forward on Sybil's lap, he laughed idiotically, and his eyes became vacant and expressionless.

The datura was doing its fiendish work well.

Rousing himself by an effort he laughed wildly, saying "any one would think I was tight, but I am not. No, by G——"

Again his head fell down.

Sybil waited a few moments.

He did not move.

He was in the firm embrace of the datura.

Stupefaction had taken possession of him.

Putting her hand in his pockets she secured the two books containing the notes, and was placing them in her pocket when Mat entered with the wine.

He guessed what had taken place in a moment.

His master had been robbed.

"Thief!" he cried, "give me those books."

"Never!" replied Sybil.

"Then I will hand you over to the police," exclaimed Mat.

"I had a notion of what was going on, and luckily have come just in time to prevent the robbery."

Like a flash of lightening, like the sudden inroad of a mighty rush of waters, the past came into Sybil's mind.

She knew who the servant of Simeon Bonar was.

"You will not move one step," she said.

"And what is to prevent me? not you, or any other woman in Whitechapel," replied the servant defiantly.

"Stir one step, and the hangman shall claim you."

The man trembled like a leaf. "Wh—what do you say?" he stammered.

Drawing herself up to her full height, and extending her arm, she cried in a loud voice,

"You dare not call the police, for you are Matthew Collin, and murdered Guy Cheriton."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Found Drowned."

Mathew Collin was not at all prepared for this denunciation on the part of Sybil. Mr. Bonar still continued insensible. Seeing that Collin was in doubt how to act, she boldly advanced to the door, left the room unmolested and was soon in the street.

She then made her way to Dyke Dayle's, and being instantly admitted, threw the money on the table.

"That's a good clever girl," he said, eagerly grasping the gold and notes, "call in the morning and you shall receive your reward."

Sybil said "good night," in an abstracted manner, appearing to take little interest in what he said.

Wishing to gloat over his gold Dyke Dayle showed her the door, and when she was in the street she sat down on a door-step, as if to collect her thoughts.

The rough command of a policeman to "move on," called her to get up and walk with a purposeless manner towards Wapping

Life had few charms left for her ; she had become a thief, and was daily sinking deeper and deeper into degradation.

A sort of panic fear that Matthew Collin, or more likely Mr. Simeon Bonar might denounce her, seized hold of her imagination.

Her mind was feverish, and irritably nervous through drink.

This fear grew upon her to such an extent, that she dared not return to her lodgings.

All that night she wandered about the streets.

In the morning she called upon Dyke Dayle, and received a few sovereigns as part of her reward, then she went into a public house and drank brandy at the bar as long as they would serve her.

When she became noisy and palpably intoxicated, they turned her out, and she went to a coffee-shop and slept for a few hours. It was night,—black hideous night when she awoke, and the cold air made her shiver, drawing her shawl tightly around her she sallied forth into the streets. There was more brandy drinking, and her mind began to totter ; she was in a state in which she was not answerable for her actions.

The river was before her.

The treacherous water was being driven up stream with a swift tide.

Very fascinating was it as she gazed upon it.

The infatuated woman had all the mad promptings of a suicide.

One plunge, she thought, would place her out of the reach of all her troubles. Simeon Bonar could not prosecute and throw her into prison for robbing him.

Why was there no one to clasp his strong arms around her neck—strong in love's strange might, folding them tenderly close and warm, to draw her away from the fatal brink.

Why was there no one to press his face against her lips of snow. Ah ! the anguish that makes them quiver so. If kisses could fall like the morning dew to comfort her in her weakness and mortal pain, and draw her back from the dread abyss.

Poor thing ! a dying bird never drooped its crest with a deadlier in in its wounded heart. Her bright tresses veiled her face, as if an angel at her back, wished to shut out the alluring prospect

The chill blast swept past her. It reminded her of the hard world, and her miserable future.

Hesitating no longer, she uttered a wild cry and plunged into the gurgling waters, which closed over her in a deadly embrace.

Ah ! well. It was only—

“ One more unfortunate, weary of breath,
Rashly importunate, gone to her death.”

• • • • •

Later in the night two policeman were bending over an inanimate body, which they had dragged from the river.

Their lanterns shed a lurid gleam over the poor pale features, and the matted, damp, tangled hair, revealing what was once the temples of an immortal soul, but which now represented only the body of a woman, who had fully reaped the harvest of vice—the wages of sin, called by the Evangelist, **Death**

THE END.



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